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**THE PHILOSOPHY  
OF  
SRI VEMANA**



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**RESEARCH GUIDE  
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## ***Prologue***

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**Chapter : I**  
**INTRODUCTION**

**a) Present Crisis in Society**

**b) Need for the Present Study**

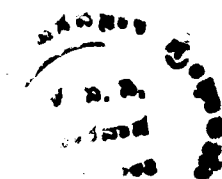


### **a) Present Crisis in Society**

Who is Vemana ? What is his philosophy ? What are his contributions to the society? Is there any necessity to study Vemana's philosophy ? What is the present crisis in the society ? All the questions above are being murmured in the minds and the hearts of the people.

Since the dawn of the rationality thinkers and scholars of every age have thought about man and human society. They thought about man's sufferings and happiness, his relations with his fellow beings and the ideals of a good man in a happy society. During the times of crisis, depending upon the place and the time some problems assume utmost importance. In such situations the intellectuals assume the role of reformers and try to reform the men and human society. They exhibit universal qualities like love, affection, harmony, sympathy, co-operation, sacrifice and service above caste/ creed, colour, region, race and religion. Their reformations appeal to head, heart and hand. That is why they go beyond the time boundaries and become suitable for application whenever the human-kind faces such burning problems.

Such reformers are seen in different fields of human life, namely social, economical, political, moral, religious and cultural.



One may be serious about one field or two fields or all fields. All depend upon the demand of the then existing human society. Most of the prominent theories and practices have been the products of such reformations. Until the burning problems are solved, the men are made to lead their normal life, their reformations are continued by these reformers. Their reformations concentrate on what 'ought to be' rather than on what 'is'. The advent of a reformer indicates something wrong in the state of affairs in the society. When a thinker is moved deeply in his head and heart, he starts an indepth keen study of the existing social conditions. Later he tries to evolve a new set of ideals and values in order to help man to void such crisis in future, apart from making human-life happy. In every century such reformers are common in every country. India is no exception, in enjoying the blessings and messages, the reformation and saviourship by people like Vyasa, Valmiki, Vasistha, Rama, Lord Krishna, King Janaka, Lord Mahavir, Buddha, Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhava, Kabir, Rajaramohan Roy, Tilak, Motilal Nehru, Subhaschandrabhash, Aurabindo, Vivekananda, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Gandhi. Among these noted social philosopher thinker and reformer is Yogi Vemana.

It was beyond doubt that whether Vemana belongs to 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Accordingly to A.C. Brown, Vemana belongs to 17<sup>th</sup>



Century. R.L. Campbell opined that he belongs to 16<sup>th</sup> Century. According to Mac Donald he belongs to 16<sup>th</sup> Century. According to Less. E. Gower, he belongs to 14<sup>th</sup> Century. According to Rallapalli Anantha Krishna Sharma he belongs to 18<sup>th</sup> Century. No body coincides with each other. Vemana was born in an ordinary peasant family followed Virasaivism due to its radical ideology. But by the time of Vemana the radical ideology of Virasaivism degenerated to such an extent that the saivite mendicants were mostly impostors and roamed about the villages and collected funds from gullible peasants. They performed a plethora of fraudulent rituals and ceremonies. On observing all these things Vemana lost faith and criticised bitterly and equated them as bandits. It is also beyond doubt that whether Vemana belongs to Reddy community or Kapu community. It is also a controversial one. In his childhood his brought up was not a steady one. Due to over affection he was brought up as a proud child. He was highly social and cordial with all classes of people. He was a roaming child. Never he used to care the field. He used to attend regularly the temple activities. He used to evince keen interest in Harikathas and Folk arts that are carried in a village. Through this Vemana got close touches with epics. As he was very closely associated with people belonging to different religions, he got good acquaintance with them. When he was an adult his rationality made him to think deeply about the impact of

corruption, prostitution, the Devadasi and Basivi systems on society.

Vemana's father was Komaragiri Vema Reddee and mother was Mangamamba. Vemana was the third son of his parents. Venkatareddy and Ramachandrarreddy were his brothers. We know the birth residence and caste through the following poems.

***The village of our body in which the deity  
Dwells is in Hill Town (The head);  
his is in back street (The spine)  
There is silence in the first house.  
We gaze and continually view it,  
This is the road of beatitude! <sup>1</sup>***

***Pakanati Reddy, and Motah Reddy and  
Tota Pedda Yerra Reddy these are all stubborn,  
Wretches accomplished in all hardness  
Thus have they gained celebrity.<sup>2</sup>***

According to the above poem, he belongs to Reddy caste which was uncivilised in those days. His residence in Kondaveedu western street first house of Mugachintapalli which is in Cuddapah District which comes under Rayalaseema, Andhra Pradesh. We can find 'Vemana Temple' at Kataripalle, Kadiri Taluk, Ananthapur District and his 'tomb' is found at Nallacheruvu Village, Andhra Pradesh.

There are many cock and bull stories in publicity. Some say he spent his early days with Vesyas (Prostitutes) and vexed with that life Vemana renounced worldly life, but did not teach the

people the advantages of such life. There may be a few hundred poems written by Vemana. But the researchers collected more than four thousand poems. We cannot differentiate which are original and which are added.

When he became adult by roaming in different villages he got good knowledge about different areas. Along with this he developed good association with prostitutes. By the time he became a married person his family became poor. Due to separation of family members he was durable to gain through agriculture only. With the poverty he faced some ups and downs in life. There was no peace either in him or in his family. In order to come out of his poverty he made friendship with people who knew the preparation of gold. Leaving the village, he became the wanderer and tried for jobs in the towns. He approached the rulers but in vain. After realising there is no use in roaming out-side, finally he reached his own native place. Both his family members and villagers found fault with him. He understood that nobody is having moral strength to find fault with him. The people called Vemana as a mad fellow. Vemana was vexed with life. He repented a lot. He realised the social injustices in the society. People are only on untruth, some truth seekers become his disciples. His detachment made him a nude monk. He conquered nudity. He was very much moved with

the atrocities amoralities in the society. Such reactions of Vemana became messages to the whole man kind ultimately. Vemana never said that he was a sage. But told that he was vexed with the worldly life. We understand his position through the following poem.

***When we are born in the womb of our mother,  
at first, we had not clothing, nor shall have  
it at our latter end Is it not it then a joke for us  
to wear clothing in our intermediate life ? <sup>3</sup>***

According to the above poem we can imagine that Vemana is "Digambara" (naked). In Tanjor palace in a drawing Vemana is found without clothes (naked).

Vemana was one of the most novel and creative of thinkers of that age. Besides being a poet, he was very much alive to the problem of man and society in the various spheres of individual life and social existence. His keen observation of the man and the society made him to think rationalistically and become a social reformer. As a social reformer, he was guided by his value preferences personally, interpersonally and socially. All his social policies and ideals revolved around the reformation of the individual and the society. That was why his social philosophy can be dubbed as a radical of the radicals. Without any fear or favour Vemana undertook the reformatory style of life. He critically examined the human life and its burning problems. He offered solutions to end

the human misery. It was here, he showed his realistic temper and adopted a practical approach to solve the human problems.

Vemana did not produce long literary works like those produced by the 'Puranic' or the 'Prabhanda' poets. Nor was he, like them, a profound scholar well versed in grammar and poetics. Yet he wrote great poetry, adopting a simple native meter, 'ataveladi', and in a language that common people spoke in their every day lives.<sup>4</sup> His poetry was the result of his genuine humanism and of his rationalistic approach to all human problems and as such, it has a universal appeal. We can, therefore, rightly place Vemana among the great poets of the world.

Nothing that is narrow. Vemana's poetry transcends time and place. Even though his teachings and critical utterances related to the social, economic and religious problems of his time, there is the quality of universality in them. In spite of differences of nationality, of language, of religion, economic and political institutions, man's fundamental problems are the same everywhere problems regarding his humanity and the growth of his mind.

What does man need to live a long, happy life? This is not a question of recent times. It arose even when man was in the earliest evolutionary stage. The mental development that modern man has attained is tremendous. He has conquered nature. Time and

distance are no longer barrier to him. He is able to move with incredible speed, and is visiting other heavenly bodies. Nothing can check his progress. He goes freely where ever he wants to. Notwithstanding all this wonderful progress, he is not happy, What is the cause? It is not far to seek. His selfishness, his self deception and his indifference are the cause.

Vemana was a humanist, a progressive thinker and a psychologist who could discern the depths of the human heart and mind. Man should exercise his reasoning powers, develop his sense of judgment and perform his duties and responsibilities. He should never forget his humanity and his duties as a human being. This is the substance of Vemana's teachings. The following stanza is remarkable in as much as it contains a true dedicated man.

***“Anyulakunu vachechu napada tanadiga***

***Nennuvadu bhuvini nunna vadu”***

“Only that man is a living man who feels the sufferings of his fellow men as his own. And when such a living man meditates upon the meaning of this life and the life hereafter, he becomes a supreme human being. Vemana implies that all the others may be considered a dead so far as the duty of man as man is concerned. How well he has pointed out man's first duty. What great meaning is contained in four short lines: Unless man cultivates his attitude,



he can never solve his problems. There can never be peace and happiness in his life.

Who can overcome fate? There is no help against fate. What man suffers now is the result of his past 'karma'. Nothing can be done to ward off the blows of fate. Things happen according to God's will. The human problem can never be solved, for no sooner is one problem solved than another arises. Who are we, either to help others or to harm them ? Such beliefs and questions are frequently given utterance to by our so called philosophers, of whom there are any number in the society of our time. There have been, too, some extreme fatalists who look on calmly doing nothing even when their neighbors are being robbed in front of their eyes. They ascribe everything to man's 'karma' or fate. What sort of men are these pseudo-philosophers?

Vemana was a bitter enemy of this kind of fatalistic philosophy. He was a great optimist and believed in man's creative effort.

***"Bhumilona Puttu bhusara mellaru  
tanuvulona puttu tattvamella  
sramamulona puttru sarvambu tanounu"***<sup>5</sup>

All the articles essential for man's existences have their source in the earth. All philosophies arise out of the human mind. It is human labour that produces everything.

Man's history reveals to us the progress that he has achieved through the ages since the time he was living on trees. We can find there have been incessant efforts at progress in the different fields and in the different stages in his development. Man's will to live better is the one dominant factor that has brought about all revolutions, reforms and scientific inventions and discoveries. He has achieved almost all that he could wish for.

While, on the one hand, man must strive to achieve higher and yet bigger things, he should, on the other hand, always remember his duty as a man. This is the greatest rule of conduct. Man cannot afford to forget that he is a social being. He has to be aware of the inseparable link between his welfare and that of the society in which he lives. Everything in the universe obeys certain natural laws, and man, being the pinnacle of evolution, should not disregard the duties enjoined upon him by his moral sense. If any man looks at other man's wives with lustful eyes, will not his wife be looked at in the same way by other men? If you rob others, it is but just that others should rob you. The golden rule is to consider your neighbor's difficulties as your own and to do what you would want them to do to you. This one principle is enough as foundation for the creation of a really cultured society. It is utterly useless merely to quote rules of conduct from 'dharmashastras' in which,

very often, principles praised in one place are condemned in another place.

‘Dharma’ and justice do not originate in books; their real place of origin is the human heart.<sup>6</sup> They depend upon place, time and circumstances. Only that ethical(dharma) is the best which is conducive to the progress and happiness of society.<sup>7</sup> Anything that causes the disintegration of society is ‘adharma’, even if it is found in the ‘dharma shastras’.

There is in our country, no lack of ‘dharmashastras’, ‘niti shastras’ and works of good counsel. Most of these books repeat the same things, though indifferent words. And they are : Speak the truth. Do good deeds. Revere your parents and teachers as you would revere the gods. Character is the best of man’s adornments. Do not covet others possessions. Do good to others. Maintain your self- respect and dignity – and one can go on adding to this list endlessly.

Though it may be argued that Vemana, too, taught the same things, there is a fundamental differences. There is a certain uniqueness in his telling them. His sayings are full of rationalist thought and a remarkable realism pervades them. One must possess a keen sensibility and a sympathetic understanding to see the greatness of Vemans’s utterances. Look at the following highly

thought-provoking and practical suggestion he has given us with regard to speaking the truth :

***“Nijamuladu vani nindinchu jagamella  
nijamuladaradu neechuthonu  
nijamahathmu gooda nijamada Valayuna”<sup>8</sup>***

“Mean people look down upon a man who tells truth. Truth must never be spoken when dealing with such people. Tell the truth only when you are in the presence of truthful men.” This is very sound, worldly wise advice. We are told how to avoid trouble from hypocrites. I am afraid, people who believe in truth as Harischandra practiced it, will not like what Vemana has said here with regard to truth.

As Dr. C.R. Reddy has said, whenever Vemana was in doubt with regard to the righteousness or otherwise of an action, he did not refer to ‘dharma shastras’ but applied his naturally unerring commonsense, and took a decision. It was this great poet who set rationalist criticism on its throne.<sup>9</sup> Here is another of Vemana’s verses in which he speaks about giving charity.

***“Dosakari yaina doosarikadaina  
pagathudaina veda Brahmudaina  
Vatle leni pedavani keedagu neevi”<sup>10</sup>***

During Vemana's time, the disparity between the rich and the poor was very great. The poor had to depend on the rich for their existence and they invariably lived in misery. But the rich people, in accordance with the injunctions in the 'Dharma Shastras', gave charity only to the high-caste people and those were always Brahmins. And even among the Brahmins only certain sects were worthy of receiving charity. It was immaterial whether the recipient was really in need or not. It is enough if he belonged to a caste specified in the sacred books. And even that charity was done for prestige. It was mere showing off. Both the giver and the receiver were hypocrites. It was like a game. We see this sort of game being played even today. We very rarely find a sincerely generous person.

Vemana's heart was filled with genuine love for the poor. There was no vagueness in his statement. His ideas are to the hearts of thoughtful people as the sun's rays are to the lotus. He asked the rich to give relief to those who starved, who ever they might be. The starving must be fed, whether they were good or bad, high-caste or low-born, friends or foes; even if they were 'chandalas'(untouchables). A rich person, however worthy he may be, by virtue of his birth, does not deserve charity, Vemana declared. Vemana's heart went out to the indigent, and his words are full of significance. One must have a really feeling heart to

understand their full import. We thus see that Vemana was a great humanist and a sincere friend of the poor. He says “ Give freely to the starving poor and save their lives. Love all living beings. The ‘jeeva’ is God. Man is born to live, to live long and in peace and happiness, and not to die soon because one has to die sometime or other. The adage: ( He who is born has to die) should not be misunderstood. Its purpose is that we should live without fear of death. It does not mean that we should think of death constantly and die long before death actually comes. If man had given way to despair because death was inevitable, what could he have achieved? There would have been no progress of any kind. It is a truism to say that man has to die sooner or later. But he has to live happily and peacefully as long as he lives. He should not suffer by injustice in spirit of fatalistic resignation. The good things of life produced by his labour are meant for him, too, not only for the affluent.

They should be shared by all. Such is Vemana’s practical philosophy, born out of his humanism. The rich in his days lived most selfish lives thinking that the poor suffered as a result of their past ‘karma’, and that it was but just punishment. They did not feed the hungry even though they had plenty of food, They were indifferent spectators of misery, starvation and death. Addressing such heartless rich men, Vemana said:

***“Jeevi pokamunde Jeeva vasthuvu lichi  
Jeevi nilupa valayu Jeevanamuga  
Jeevi thologu venuka Jeeva vasthuvu lela”?***

“ Give the life-sustaining things when there is life in the body. No charity can help once the life ceases. Of what avail can the good things of life (Jeeva Vastuvalu) be after death? This is the direct question that Vemana put to the indifferent rich of his time. Even today this is the most pressing of man’s problems all over the world.

Those were the days where the poets were in the courts of the kings enjoying riches and pompond writing the 'Prabandhas'. The society was divided and subdivided into thousands of castes. The upper caste people were enjoying privileges. There was a huge gulf between the uppercaste people and lowercaste people and between the poor and the rich. The doctrine of Karma seems to have reinforced its strangle-hood on the minds of mass. Vemana raised his voice against oppression and took the side of poorer sections of the society. He rejected the feudal ideology and was the most virulent critic of the octopus grip of the status quo. He is the poet of the people and was the foremost anabaptist, the pioneer of the social protestantism and the "Morning Star" of our reformation, creative imagination for wit and humour for originality and boldness of expression and for capacity to debank superstitions and to expose pretensions.

He has created awareness among the people in the society towards the exploitation of the feudal landlords and the religious people of his days. He is a social rebel constantly at war with the upholders of the caste system. He is even more violently opposed to the practice of untouchability, the worst crime of man against man. He disliked the then prevailing caste system. He was against righting for caste superiority. According to him no caste is high or low. Fighting for this is of no use. All castes are born from only one caste. That caste is called by Vemana as human caste. Calling a caste as high or low is a dead talk. This is revealed through the following poems.

***They that were born in higher castes and creeds;  
And they that are proud of their learned weeds;  
Won't they be slaves in mind to the wealthy breeds  
Listen to Vema spokesman of vox populi'. <sup>11</sup>***

***Higher than worship it's intellect that stands  
Stronger than a word it's the mind that ever stands  
Better than caste it's is virtue of man that stands  
Listen to vema spokesman of 'voxpathuli'. <sup>12</sup>***

***Why do we, even now hold caste in our fold  
And resort to creeping the seeds age old  
Who is now the twice - born castes as we are told  
Listen to Vema, spokesman of vox populi'. <sup>13</sup>***

Vemana is a pucca realist. He hated the caste. He criticised



the practice of caste. He analysed that one who was born in higher caste uses it to suppress the other people. He insults the people by using harsh words. He tries to show pride by showing that he is born twice. But Vemana warns that, every man or woman is born in only one place that is mud. So, Vemana expresses this as an open secret and establishes that caste never comes with birth.

Vemana proves that wealth enjoys superior value than caste. A person who is born in lower caste, if possess wealth or money will be respected in society. Vemana after seeing the debacle of the village crafts men, in changing their professions for earning more money, hackled at them for their dual life.

Vemana saw untouchability as a social curse. This is a symbol for social adharma. He analyses that muscle and meat is same in a Harijan and all others. No doubt, by caste people may differ. But there is one man residing in every individual. He is a human being. So, Vemana criticises that the blind people who can't see 'human being' in a man alone is jumping with joy sticking to castes.

Vemana argues that it is by behaviour only any man has to become Harijan but not by birth. One who fails to keep up his word alone is a mala or harijan. One who practices untouchability and argues illogically alone is a mala. Vemana's philosophy on caste is not born out of selfishness. His only anxiety is that man is not able to live like a man. The persons who dishonour and disrespect his own persons are called by him as 'human-cows'.

The following verses tell about the mala caste in a wonderful manner.

***Caste is a pariarism, a wife is a parcel of mala-mutra  
Can love be produced in the body towards such a wife  
The mind through spiritual knowledge becomes a form  
of God. <sup>14</sup>***

***A pariar eats flesh, all other people eat  
Fat are not they one caste ?  
They do not see that all castes are in fact one. <sup>15</sup>***

***Why dost again and again abuse a pariar ?  
Are not his blood and flesh and thine one ?  
Of what caste is he who is immingled with him ? The  
deity animates his entire works. <sup>16</sup>***

In the above verses Vemana questions the people who eat the meat by observing that even the ghee they eat contain the fat. So, Vemana unveils the truth that all people come under Malas if food-habits decide the caste. That is why he concludes that all people belong to one caste. That is the caste of human being. The condemnation of caste by Vemana opened new doors in society. According to him Malas are superior to the people who kill the living beings. The reason is Malas eat usually dead cows. He laughs at the people who takes second bath after touching Malas. He equals this with the human cows who contaminate the water with their bath.

We see him not only as a poet but also as a humanist and social reformer. His poetry reflects his humanity and his ideal of social justice. Humanism was his religion, and social equality was

his life's goal. He proclaimed that distinctions of race, religion and caste should be rooted out and that humanity should become one family. He condemned the idol worship, superstitions and practices. He desired that people should develop a critical and rationalist outlook. There is an inseparable relationship between man's economic and social problems, he said. He asked men to work hard and earn money by right methods and live contented lives. It was labour that produced everything, he said emphatically.

Whatever be the subject that Vemana discusses, he discusses it with a remarkable clarity and in a most rational manner. "Races and castes must go. Religious distinctions must be effaced, social equality should be established. But these tasks cannot be accomplished by mere talk. The one essential factor is man's economic independence. His social problems can be effectively solved only when he is economically prosperous", said Vamana.

Vemana wished that all humanity should live in world of freedom, peace and happiness. The glaring disparity between the rich and the poor made him very unhappy. He felt that there could be no peace in society until that disparity ceased. To remove economic inequalities, he suggested a number of ways. He exhorted people to adopt his suggestions for the sake of social justice. While he asked the poor people to make every effort to achieve economic

independence, he also desired the wealth to share their wealth with the poor and the needy. He, however, wanted them to do so with discrimination. He said that help should be given without considerations of caste or creed. The only criterion must be real need.

If a few rich persons live lives of luxury while millions suffer for want of food and clothing, there will be discontent in society. Realising that this discontent will lead to anarchy, the rich must act generously towards the poor" said Vemana again and again. But the heartless rich men did not pay heed to Vemana's teachings. The naturally emotional Vemana could not contain his righteous anger. He condemned the callousness of the rich in the strongest terms. He said, "These sons trumps throw away thousands and lakhs to please the prostitutes who satisfy their passions, but will not give a handful of rice to a man dying of hunger". He did not stop there, he went further and said "seize the wealth from the wealthy, through violence if need be and distribute it among the poor" Vemana thus a revolutionary.

Besides this, this revolutionary poet suggested another wise method to bring about an egalitarian social system. Vemana knew that at one time the Telugu villages were prosperous, and that life there was happy and contented. The institution of joint family was

a binding force that contributed to co-operative endeavour and economic well-being. People firmly believed that living together and working together was the surest way to happiness. Every farmer had enough persons in his own family to do all the agricultural work, and wives and husbands, brothers and sisters and uncles and aunts made the family both strong and prosperous. Heads of such families were regarded as the leaders of the villages. Sometimes the head of a family gave his daughter in marriage to a young man of a poor family and made him a member of his own family. This made the family stronger and richer because the son-in-law sincerely strove for the family into which he came. Such marriages proved very successful, and thus the joint family of these days contributed not a little to social cohesion and co-operation. The rich were considerate towards the poor and the disparity in their styles of living was not abhorrent. But this social order was crumbling by Vemana's time. The disparity between the rich and the poor grew greater, society broke up owing to class distinctions. There were no marriages alliances between the rich and the poor. The rich looked down on the poor, and the poor were sullenly subservient to the rich. The classes lived in distrust and contempt of each other. Vemana's love of humanity and sense of social justice could not endure this painful division in society. He strove hard to bring about unity and cordiality. His ideal was a classless

egalitarian society. The structure of social equality could be raised only on the foundation of co-operation living, he firmly believed. There should be free intercourse between the rich and the poor, and the two classes must be closely bound by marriage ties, he advised.

The following verses of Vemana in which he speaks about the marriages.

***He who takes a connection of his own and without reckoning his wealth, looks only to his age bestows the dowry and thus gives his daughter (woman) in marriage, this is the wisest of all. <sup>17</sup>***

***Given one's daughter to a rich man is like the water of a well flowing into the sea. But a woman given to a poor man is like watering a lime tree with sea of water. <sup>18</sup>***

***Through a man's wealth he gets an excellent wife (punyavathi).***

***Thus a fit husband is also gained by an excellent woman.***

***By the fortune (bhagam) of both, friends and good sons and the eight blessings will be gained. <sup>19</sup>***

***When a marriage contract (manuvu) is made by a rich man with a poor one, wealth and became thereby united***

***what then is possession and what is poverty. <sup>20</sup>***

***If you bestow your daughter in marriage looking to  
wealth,***

***It is as if you gave her for a price***

***The dignified way is to give her to an equal***

***If thou give her to a poor man, they remain***

***Entwined in close attachments.*** <sup>21</sup>

***Mother, father, friends and relations***

***And all others will seek and desire a young man***

***They will give him the girl but not***

***Fortune with her.*** <sup>22</sup>

Vemana condemned dowry system even in those days. He reveals that it is nothing but a selling it as a bad practice. He recommends to give the girl to a poor boy who knows the difficulties and who knows the real love. He also condemned child marriages. A young wife to a old man is also condemned by him as dangerous. That is why without value to money if marriages are performed in between equals, they are the strongest.

With regard to the family Vemana holds that a house becomes heaven, if there is a wife with good character and children who enjoy good behaviour. According to Vemana the heaven here on earth. He gave prominence more to empirical values than heavenly values. He is against to neglect the empirical world.

Vemana is against destroying families with selfishness. He supports combined families. He expects every woman to shine like a

lamp. For him every house is a temple. Through several poems Vemana warned people not to listen to their wives for separation. To him such people are mad people. After marriage of any person neglects his parents, Vemana views such people as bad people. He went to the extent of cursing such persons as dead persons who fail to serve their parents in their old age.

Vemana expresses how relatives from wife-side and mother-side become friendly and father-side become enemical. From mother-in-law side, the son-in-law receives all rewards. Even from the maternal uncle some well but father side. People divide the property and take away. So in daily life human relations are governed by economic loss.

***They that are from the wife's are near and dear***

***They that are from the mother's aren't that near***

***One quarrels with the ones from the father's dear ?***

***Listen to Vema, spokesman of vox populi.....*** <sup>23</sup>

Vemana found fault with drinking alcohol. He appreciated a drunkard a superior to a fellow who tells lies. He cautioned the people not to take the narcotics. It is nothing but weakness. One who yields to this will be destroyed by it. A fellow who drinks will spoil his health but a fellow who tells lies destroys the society. The second fellow is always dangerous according to Vemana.



Vemana attacked the life of prostitutes through the following verses.

*A wore devoid of lewdness is the devil's daughter;  
Joyless work a plague of rubbing.  
Thus a village devoid of a liberal man is demon's town. <sup>24</sup>  
Say not, this one, she is not fresh and this one is fresh.  
Be she old or young, the enamoured paramour cannot  
quit her.  
Can you call an old buffalo's milk nasty ?  
Love goes by liking alone. <sup>25</sup>*

*The whore praises all the ways of the whore monger  
The whore's mother exposes his infamy  
It is hurtful to meddle with a whore who hath a mother. <sup>26</sup>*

*It is ruin to go with a gypsy's whore  
Who can restrain a sinful mind  
If she will leave the village I beg one elsewhere. <sup>27</sup>*

*A wore's elder sister will cares and kiss you.  
The paramour gazes at her through love of his whore  
Those of the wife's side are all his relations. <sup>28</sup>*

*It is a fool that leaves his own wife at Home  
And goes away to seek a harlot's dome:  
Isn't a like gathering gleans, leaving ripe corn field?  
Listen to Vema, spokesman of vox populi <sup>29</sup>*

According to him a fellow who leaves his wife and goes along with a prostitute is merely a mad fellow. It is a share madness, his own field with crops and moves in collecting the debris in other fields. It amounts to saying that man should run after illusion leaving his complete expenses. It is share ignorance to run after the run of the prostitution leaving the run of the wife.

Vemana is gifted with the poetic talent and the description is very natural.

***A pebble in a shoe and a fly near the ear  
A mote in an eye, a thorn in a foot, dear  
And a fight in family, none can fear, that is clear  
Listen to Vema, spokesman of voxpopuli. 30***

Vemana has seen that in the society at every step there will be some obstacles. The stone in a shoe never allows a man to walk freely. A fly near the ear makes continuous sounds. If it enters into the ear it bites and blood flows out. If some foreign material enters into the eye it creates burns. It hampers perfect sights. If a thorn enters into the leg it gives serious pains. If opposition comes from one's own house it is a continuous suffering. It is an indescribable suffering. So, all these experiences can be rectified with proper thinking and cleverness. It is easy to rectify them. Similarly Vemana cautions every good man to be careful with a bad fellow who comes nearer to him. The creatures which enter into the roots will destroy even a big tree. Thus, Vemana as a great thinker, social reformer, humanist and great philosopher always attempted to offer practical solutions to the realistic problems faced by the people both personally and socially.

Vemana's message, therefore, is for the entire humanity. He has taught us what man's highest duty is, and reminded us again and again that our welfare is dependent on how well we perform this duty. A similar philosophy is the basis of all Tolstoy's novels and short stories. Vemana was a believer in one God, a great humanist and a practical philosopher. There is no ambiguity anywhere in his writings

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1. Vooru Kondaveedu, Vuniki Pachhamaveedhi Moogachhintapalle modati illu Yarasi chooda zooda nadi mukti marga mo, Viswadabhurama ... Vinuravema. **C.P. Brown : Verses of Vemana, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1991, Poem. 467, page 118.**
2. Pakanati Reddee Paraga Mota Reddee Yosagu Thota Pedda Yerra Reddee Morasu landaru Bhuvu Haru Voppa Nanninta Pratibha kekki retlu paraga vema, **C.P. Brown Verses of Vemana, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1991, Poem 470, P.119.**
3. Thalli Garbhamandu tha buttinappudu Modala battaledu thudanu ledu Naduma battagatta nagubatu gada to, Viswadabhirama ... Vinuravema. **C.P. Brown Verses of Vemana, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1991, Poem 403 P.103.**
4. Viswanatha's definition of poetry that it is language producing aesthetic pleasure "Vakyam Rasatmakam Kavyam" and Mathew Arnold's definition that poetry is a criticism of life – both these definitions are true in respect of Vemana's poetry.  
See his verse " Nikkamaina Manchi Neelamakkatichalu" Verse 928.  
(One sapphire is enough if it is genuine)
5. He recognizes the distinction between the Supreme spirit and the individual self, and assigns to the human will a place and an importance which prevents him from considering men as more puppets in the hands of some superior power.  
Campbell- Vemana Through Western Eyes – V.N. Naria,
6. In Vemana's Verse : " Valusina punyambu vaiadanna papambu."
7. The purpose of duty ( Dharma has been the on ward progress in evolution of all living beings. Therefore, it is certain that whatever promotes this progress is Dharma. --- Mahabharata

8. Play the wise in a council of the learned but effect the fool in an assemblage of fools. Kural. P. 191. verse 714
9. In Vemana's book Kavittva Tatva Vicharamu, p. 10.11
10. During Vemana's time, the caste- system was more rigid than it is today. The 'mala' (Panchama caste) had no caste. They were thought to have been excluded from the Vedas. And they were not allowed to live within the village: Even today we see them living outside villages in segregation: They were not deserving of charity even when they were starving because they had no caste. It was believed that one was born as a 'chandala' in consequence of his bad' karma' in the previous life. Vemana used the expression 'Vedabahya' only because it was in vogue in his time.
11. Kulamu galugu varu gothramu galavaru  
Vidya cheta virrageegu waru,  
Pasidi galugu vani banisa kodukulu  
Viswadabhirama Vinuravema.  
***Dr. Koteswara Rao, P. : Timeless poems of Vemana, peacock classics, publication wing of people's trust, G 14, Pragathi Enclave, Bhagavan Nagar Colony, Kukkatpalli, Hyderabad, poem 62, P. 41.***
12. Pujakanna nenchha buddhi nidanambu  
Malakanna nenchha manasu dhrudamu  
Kulam kannu nenchha gunamu pradhanambu  
Viswadabhirama Vinuravema.  
***Dr. Koteswara Rao, P. : Timeless poems of Vemana, peacock classics, publication wing of people's trust, G 14, Pragathi Enclave, Bhagavan Nagar Colony, Kukkatpalli, Hyderabad, Poem 85, P. 53.***
13. Ibid.

14. Malakulam yali malamootra bandhamu<sup>7</sup>  
Puttade shivambu pottalona  
Manasu yathma buddhi man Brahmamoorthi ra/  
Viswadabhiraama ... Vinuravema.  
**C.P. Brown : Verses of Vemana, Asian Educational Services,  
New Delhi, 1991, Poem 384, P:99.**
15. Malamansamudinu, mari sarva janulella  
Krovvudindu rokka kulamu gade  
Kulamulanni yokka  
Kulamuga joodaroo, Viswadabhiraama ... Vinuravema.  
**Ibid, poem 892, P.215.**
16. Malavaninela man man nindinpa Nodala raktamamsa mokati gade  
Vanilona melagu vani kulambedi, Viswadabhiraama ... Vinuravema.  
**Ibid, poem 893, P.215**
17. Thamaku bandhujanuni damu dodukavachi kalimiganaka vasu  
kalimi joochi dhakshinanu yosugi tharuni nichhina vadu parama  
guru danangabadunu vema:  
**C.P. Brown : Verses of Vemana, Asian Educational Series, New  
Delhi, 1991, poem 1185, P.282.**
18. Kalimi galgu vanki kasuyaka nichhuta bhuvineer nadiki Barinatlu  
Nimmaku jalarasi neerettinatundu Peda kichhu manuvu prabalu  
vema. **Ibid, Poem, 1187, P.283**
19. Purusha bhagyamunanu punyavathi doraku Punyavathiki natlu  
purusha dabbu Eruvuri bhagmunanu hitulu suputrulu Estha  
bhogamulunu namar vema **Ibid, poem 1188, P.283**
20. Kalguvadulemi Kanigichhu manuvu  
Kalimilemula natugalipi yundu  
Kalimi jooda nekkadalemira, Viswadabhiraama Vinuravema.  
**Ibid, poem 1189, P. 283**

21. Kalimi Joochi Ewa krayamichhi natlundu Samuna kiwa manchhi  
sarasagunamu Peda kiwa manuvu penavesinatlundu,  
Viswadabhirama Vinuravema. ***Ibdi, poem, 1186, P. 282***
22. Thalli dandri lella thagina chuttambulu Nella vara lella yerikori  
Baluni ganujoochhi padachhu nithurugani Bhagya miwaleru paraga  
vema. ***Abid, poem, 1990, P. 282***
23. Ali vanka vara lathma bandhuvulyri, Thallivanka varu thagina pati,  
Thandri vanka varu dayadi pagavaru Viwadabhirama Vinuravema.  
***Dr. P. Koteswara Rao, Timeless poems of Vemana peacock  
classics, publication wing of peoples' Trust, G 14, Pragathi  
Enclave, Bhagyanagar Colony, Kukkatpally, Hyderabad, poem,  
99, P. 60.***
24. Boothuleni lanja bhutambu kooturu Preethi teni patu rati chhetu  
Data leni yoor dayyala petara, Viswadabhirama Vinuravema. ***C.P.  
Brown : Verses of Vema, Asian Educational Series, New Delhi,  
1991, Poem, 353, P. 92***
25. Krothadi yidi yadu krothadi yanavaddu bhrantipadina vitudu  
bayaledu, pratha yenumu palu rothanavachhuna, Viswadabhirama  
Vinuravema. ***Ibid, poem, 354, P. 9 2***
26. Lanja lanjakani lavella gonyadu Lanjathalli vani lajja gadugu Thalli  
galugu lanja thaguluta doshambu (Adavarivanka nandaru chuttalu)  
Viswadabhirama Vinuravema. ***Ibid, poem 355, P. 93***
27. Dommariyagu lanjatho guda dosanbu Papi eima manasu pattaradu  
Veedu gadalipote velludu retlanoo, Viswadabhirama Vinuravema.  
***Ibid, Poem 357, P. 93***
28. Lanjadani yakka lalinchu muddadu Minda daraya lajameedi prema  
Nadudani venka madaru chhuttamul Viswadabhirama Vinuravema.  
***Ibid, Poem 358, P. 93***

29. Intiyali vidichhi ilia yarakanthala Venta diruguvadu vemvadu Pantachenu vidichhi parege yerinayatlu Viswadabhiraama vinura vema. **Dr. P. Koteswara Rao : Timeless poems of Vemana, Peacock Classics, Publication Wing of Peoples' Trust, G 14, Pragathi Enclave, Bbagyanagar Colony, Kukkatipalli, Hyderabad, Poem, 37, P. 29.**
30. Chheppuloni rayi chevuloni joreega Kantiloni nalusu kalimullu Intiloni poru inthantha gadaya Viswadabhiraama Vinuravema. **Ibid, Poem, 100, P. 60.**

## **Chapter II**

### **LIFE OF SRI VEMANA**



Vemana was brought into limelight with the publication of his collected poems by C.P. Brown in 1829. Brown again published a second collection of about 1200 poems in 1839. Another edition of Vemana's poems was published in 1919 in Machilipatnam, which contained 4000 poems! It was Brown who published a translation of poems of Vemana in English. Though Vemana was looked down upon by scholars initially he as a poet secured his place in the literary galaxy because of his popular appeal. He was a poet of the people.<sup>1</sup>

As a civil servant of East India Company, Charles Phillip Brown(1793-1884) came to India from England in 1816. He rendered yeoman service to the Telugu literature. He learned Telugu from Pandits and scholars as an interesting subject. He published Telugu to English and English to Telugu Dictionaries. He was in search of Telugu prabandhas, kavyas and other prose and poetical works to bring them into light.

When he was at Machilipatnam in 1824 he heard for the first time some verses of Vemana through his assistant Venkata Siva Sastry. Sastry interpreted fully<sup>2</sup>. Brown was astonished. He at once jumped into the research field and started to collect the old manuscripts of Vemana verses. He procured several manuscripts (palm-leaves) from various places like Machilipatnam, Visakhapatnam, Nellore, Guntur, Bellary and Cuddapah. He

appointed pandits to correct the manuscripts and to write fair copies. Nearly 18 years he worked on these manuscripts. There were so many grammatical and linguistic mistakes. Different scripts had different versions. Many Pandits discouraged him. But he did not stop and continued it.

Brown says, the manuscripts proved to be full of errors of any kind in orthography, metre and meaning; no two copies followed the same arrangement and they varied in extent from two to eight hundred epigrams.

Brown divided the verses into three categories chiefly of moral, satirical and mystic. In the morals many verses occur breathing a spirit of devotion truly extraordinarily in a Hindu. The satirical part is chiefly directed against the traditional religion and customs particularly against Brahmins. None of it is personal. The mystic portion is chiefly of use as exemplifying the powers of the language. The riveries contained in this chapter are of a strangely abstruse nature and furnish a remarkable instance of a powerful mind searching for the light of truth which is lost in the darkness of heathen ignorance. It is easier to translate the verses in the Latin (alias) that appeared to deserve an English one. To the more difficult verses he has subjoined Telugu interpretation. For some parts of its comment written in Telugu to two very learned Brahmins, who taught him the language its grammar and prosody.

They are Tippa Bhotla Venkata Siva sastry of Machilipatnam and Advaita Brahmaiah, the pandit belonging to the court in which he had the honour of being an Assistant Judge.

Brown says, To the remarks on mystic philosophy I have subjoined a short explanation of Telugu prosody. The statements are taken from Bheemuni Chandassu, but the arrangement and mode of explanation are my own. Sir William Jones has remarked (As Res I.XVII on Panini) that since grammar is only an instrument and not the end of true knowledge there can be little occasion to travel so rough and gloomy a path to teach my self the science I was obliged to reduce the rules given by Bheemana in a very fantastic form to their real import; and a mode then occurred to me through which by degrees I learnt the whole with care. The original is so mysteriously complex the failure of most aspirants even among Brahmins to knowledge of prosody is not surprising.”<sup>3</sup>

Vemana condemned Vedic caste system, which was the root cause of all evils in the society. He opposed openly the superiority of Brahmins. They developed jealousy on Brown who was praising Vemana's poetic talents. Eighty per cent of teachers belonged to Brahmin community in the university. They created many obstacles to the literary activities of Brown. The College Board published the Verses of Vemana for the first time. In his letters Brown says, “About 50 copies were given to me and 450 disappeared. After Ten

years I discovered these rolled up as waste paper in the library I then took steps to publish Vemana. The book became popular among those who were learning either Telugu or English. It was juvenile effort I have since remodelled several pages literary life of Charles Philip Brown".<sup>4</sup> Brahmin pandits were not ready to cooperate Brown in his literary work sincerely. Brown says in his words, "In the year 1839 I delivered the present volume to a learned Brahmin who undertook to prepare a new edition but he disappointed me, for he attempted to expunge every rustic phrase and malignant rhyme even striking out whole lines and substituted others of his own composing. He went through only about a quarter of the work for and on finding what he had done I put a stop to his edition and dismissed him. <sup>5</sup>

Europeans liked only the verses of Vemana in the entire Telugu literature. The Christian priests and preachers doing religious war with non Christians took weapons from the stock room of Vemana who was the owner of the store and a Hindu moralist. Some of the Vemana verses were introduced in schools in Madras Government. They were already translated by a learned Telugu pandit.

Brown published his first edition in 1829. He selected 693 verses from the manuscripts, which he had. It was with English translation and some other details. Religious 200; Moral 214;

satirical 279. Altogether 693 verses were translated. In the second edition he omitted his translation and comments. Verses belonging to religious and moral were added. In the second edition, the verses belonging to Religions were 416, Moral 468; and satirical 279. Total verses were 1163.

Afterwards several books were released on Vemana Verses. The London mission press and public instruction press both published "Verses of Vemana" Booklets from Vizag. In those booklets religious constituted 68; Moral 51; and Satirical 82, altogether 201 verses.<sup>6</sup> A new edition of Vemana being called for, the work has been reprinted without the English version, and extended to nearly double the former size by an appendix added to each book. An equal number of verses yet remain unprinted.

It appears that he was not a Jangama as is indeed shown by his silence regarding their great teacher Basava. But his tenets coincide more closely with those of the Jangamas than with those of any other sect. Vemana indeed belonged to no sect. Further it is the general belief that his writings are fully four centuries old. If the Jangamas are correct in making him coeval with the writer of the Telugu "Basava Puranam" this would give an era yet more remote than the earliest I have mentioned yet in every page we find the common colloquial expressions used at the present day.<sup>7</sup> Madras November 1839.

C.P. Brown left India after his retirement. Research work was not completed. He paved the way for the future research scholars. Nobody touched the work nearly hundred years.

At the dawn of the twentieth century some sensational changes took place. Kommaraju Lakshmana Rao, Dr. C.R. Reddy, Vanguri Subbarao, Veturi Prabhakara Sastry, Bandaru Tammaiah and Panchagnura AudinarayanaSastry entered in to the field. Vemana's name and fame crossed the country's limits and continental limits. In the first part of the twentieth century there were many books released on Vemana Satakas, dramas, stories and some devotional works. All were unreal and fabricated stories. A film " Yogi Vemana" was also released under the direction of B.N. Reddy. But the film was failed because of mere fantasy.

- Who was Vemana?
- When and where was he born?
- How did he lead his life?
- What were his aims and ideals?

Nobody has given an answer with authoritative evidence. All have said that he was a great people's poet of Andhra. Many fantasies and miracle stories about Vemana prevailed in the common folk.

According to Vemana Yogeendra Charitra Vemana was born in the clan of Reddy kings of Knodaveedu. They were called “Panta Reddies”. Vemana’s father was Kumaragiri Vema Reddy, his mother was Mallamamba. Vemana was the third son. Prabhu Vemareddy alias Komati Venkareddy and Raacha Vemareddy were his brothers. Komati Venkareddy ruled Knodaveedu from 1396 to 1424 and Racha Vema Reddy from 1424 to 1428. These Reddy kings patronized Sreenath Mahakavi and Rayani Bhaskara and other poets. The above book says Vemana belongs to that time. But historians and scholars discarded the genealogical tree of Sri Vemana. There was no single evidence to prove it. If Vemana’s time was before 15<sup>th</sup> century, the poets of Prabandha and the poets of Veerasaiva definitely quote his name in their verses.

There was a plea that the Vemana did not belong to any clan of Reddy. Bandaru Thammaiah was one of the old research scholars on Vemana. He believed Vemana and his ancestors were under the influence of Veerasiavism. But he failed to show an authoritative proof through the verses of Vemana. Brown thought that Vemana criticised almost all castes in his verses except Jangama. So he expected Vemana might have belonged to Jangama community which was in “Veerasaiva darsanam” Vemana did not use his Sur name. Veerasaivistes do not use their Sur names generally.

Brown wrote in the preface of his first edition of Verses of Vemana in 1829 that Vemana belonged to Jangama cult. It is not easy to ascertain anything regarding the history of Vemana, which is the personal name of the author, and sometimes occurs, through rarely among the Telugus of the present day. His family name he never disclosed, and hence was imagined him to have been a Jangam. The fact of Sudras known by this name are readers from the common religion. They worship Siva alone and on embracing the Jangama Sect. They give up the family appellation and are then usually called by the name of the sect alone. Their creed also corresponds with taught by Vemana and this is the only one not satirized by him (1829)

Vemana had no surname. He did not ridicule Jangam sect. These two points cannot stand before criticism. Brown's opinion was wrong. There is no truth. For example, great poets like Sreenatha and Dhurjati were Saivite poets. They never used their surnames. The Non-saivite poets Marana and Jakkana also never used their surnames. Dr. N. Gopi in his famous research thesis book " Prajakavi Vemana" says Vemana criticised Jangamas also in his many Verses.

" The Linga creed is the noblest of the six creeds. There is none superior in the world"<sup>8</sup> But all are thieves who wear Lingakaya. In the Linga sect, a set of hypocrites has arisen and



these having handsomely reviled one another are all turned to dust by the Turk tribe to whom their discussion render them easy converts.<sup>9</sup>

Veerasaivites worship Linga and Nandi wherever they see Nandi statue, which is lifeless prostrate before the Nandi with devotion. But they beat the bull (Nandi) which is working for the welfare of man-meaninglessly. Really the devotees of Basava (Jangamas) are sinners.<sup>10</sup>

Vemana blamed the Lingayaths who cannot see Linga in his Atma, which was in his body. How can they will be of Siva.<sup>11</sup>

After seeing the many evidences Brown changed his opinion that Vemana was not Jangama (1840)

They sometimes claim the poet Vemana as preaching their creed, but though he evidently held the Brahmins in detestation, and shows a partiality to the tenets of Basava, he does not embrace the Vaishnava tenets. The insulting manner in which he speaks of the female sex furnishes another proof that he could not be a Vaishnava. He also speaks future transmigrations to have terminated. He (Vemana) ridicules the Lingayaths “ You take a binding rope, bind and secure it. What theft has lingadu stolen that he should be thus treated? Why is it that ye cannot be thus treated? Why is it that ye cannot see and worship the invisible Atma Linga?<sup>12</sup>

Vuru konda veedu vuniki paschima veedhi Muga chintapalle  
modati illu Arasi chudachuda Aadane Sivudundu Viswadabhirama  
Vinura Vema.

Regarding this verse, which was related to the birthplace of  
Vemana. Mcdonald received different versions with different  
meanings. It is not easy to grasp the meaning.

After some time Macdonald says, " When I came to the capital  
I had a chance to see the manuscript which was examined by  
Taylor. In the volume 5th I saw the below given meaning to that  
verse.

Meaning: The body is a town. The abode of God is on the hill  
place (Kondaveedu) i.e. head. The spine, which is in back side, is  
the western street. Vemana resides in the first house of the street.  
The secret of the verse is some extent revealed.<sup>13</sup>

According to Patanjali's Yoga Suthras there are six chakras or  
lotuses in the spine. Both sides spine have two nadis named Ida  
and Pingala. Left nadi is Ida or Chandranadi the right nadi is called  
Pingala or Suryanadi. From the place of Anus the two nadis go  
upright with the spine and connect at the place in the middle of the  
two eyebrows. The place is called Bhrikuti. In the middle of Ida and  
Pingla there is a invisible nadi named Sushumna

A spiritual serpent named Kundalini resides in the Muladhara  
chakra in a round shape in sleeping mood.

The yogi must awake the serpent to his spiritual progress.

(C.P. Brown in his Telugu English dictionary says this: The spinal the name of a particular tubular vessel of the body spoken of in mystic treatise the pineal gland.)

They have connection with nostrils.

With the pranayama or in any other yogic method yogi must awake the sleeping serpent. When the serpent crossing the five chakras meets Ajna chakra the yogi will get unusual power of universe.

After knowing the real meaning of these verse C.P. Brown added it in his second edition.

His translation was:

The village of our body in which the deity dwells is hill town (The head) his is in back street ( the spine). There is silence in the first house. We gaze continually, view it this is the road of beauty.

Two more verses about Ajna chakra are joined in this edition.

" The divinity Atmalinga dwells in what is termed Ajna Chakra (The space between the two eye brows). It is only by gazing intently on the part that shines so nobly the beauty shall be attained by men.

"Cut down in the soul the five chakras nobly surmount those chakras and behold the plain beyond them.

I have seen a collection of verses of Vemana more than three thousand in a book, which has no front and last pages. So the compilers and the publisher's names are unknown. Fortunately in the last page there was the name of the printing press i.e., " Vamsi Krishna Art printers - Rajahmunday."

In the front page of the book there are 8 verses quoted with the head line " Some hints of Vemana's life history" (Popularly they are written by Vemana himself about his life as an introduction some may not believe because they have no authoritative proof)

Two of the verses are well known about his birthplace and caste:

On Poornima day in the month of Karthika a Telugu year Nandana an excellent man who will be a hero took birth and rule between the Indrakrladri (Vijayawada) and Seethuvu (Kanyakumari). Residence is the first house of Mooga chintapalle the western street in Kondaveedu whatever it may be the caste is a rude and rustic Reddy. In the beginning of my youth I was joined with cheaters, hypocrites rouges, drunkards and treacherous fellows. I wasted my valuable time with gossips scandalls, gambling drinking and other all evil doings. Then I indulged in adultery and I thought the horlot's house was my heaven. I enjoyed



with harlots and Devadasis day and nights for a long time without doing any thing. I spent plenty of money and Jewellry for this lust I inwardly understood the prostitutes who were showing immense love and affection was superficial. PROSTITUTES were ALL after money and wealth.

At last I recognised my good time and wealth were spoiled wastily. I awakened from my deep slumber of this mad lust. I have lost my peace of mind. In this horrible situation fortunately I approached a Guru named Kondaveeti Abhiramaiah and prostrated at his lotus feet. He was a compassionate saint.

"Save me, forgive me, and show me a right path with your divine grace. He was a Jnani and merciful.

He embraced me with kindness and affection. Blessed me. I became his disciple. His disciplinary actions and his teachings hypnotised me. I was changed. My heart was filled with love and mercy towards mankind. My heart was longing to live lonely in a seclusion. I wanted to go somewhere from this society. I told my guru my inner feelings and my unconsciousness. He agreed.

I prostrated before my Gurudeva Kondaveeti Abhiramaiah and worshipped Lord Siva as universal power.

I intentionally decided in my poetic verses that I would remember these names of my Guru Abhiramaiah and Siva the Visweswara as "Vishwadabhirama Vinura Vema. Vemana became

calm. He was a simple metal but the Guru changed him as Gold  
(Perhaps it may be a kind of Alchemy)

C.P. Brown in his translation of a verse says" Vemana openeth not his mouth to say no to anyone's assertion. Thus he seems like a mad man. He can explain every mystery of that Vedantam which destroys all distinctions and differences. From this knowledge his apathy arises."

In the fifth year Vemana was sent to a pandith for his learning. In those days teaching profession was undertaken by Brahmin or Viswabrahmin pandits. They taught from the alphabets to Telugu kavya, prabandhas ethics and epics along with history and mathamatics. Vemana learned within a short time to write and read. By birth he was intelligent.

In the boyhood Vemana moved freely and closely with his boy friends who belonged to various castes and creeds. He was well talkative and well behaved. Naturally he became the leader of the boys in the village circle. In those days Vemana used to go to Harikatha's, puranas, pravachanas, local folk ballads and puppet shows to improve his knowledge and for time passing. As a young boy Vemana was interested in music and poetry composing. In his verses he used simple local telugu.

When he composed verses he read out it in the friends circle. They felt happy and applauded. Vemana entered into youthful stage

with charming personality. He seems like a prince, young ladies were trying to attract him. Beautiful Devadasis and Basivis are calling him with secret gestures. Vemana moved with lust fully ideas. One day a devadasi was dancing at the Vaishnavalaya. After ending the performance Vemana followed her. She was very happy. Her mother also invited Vemana honourably because he was a small Zamindar with decent and dignified character. He stayed in their house the whole night. Vemana thought that girl was an angel and her house was heaven. Days were going on. Though she was a devadasi she loved Vemana heart-fully.

In the course of time Vemana became a paramour. He frequented once or twice in a week to fetch money or Jewellery. He could not live without his horlot. His friends and relatives advised him. After a long time he lost everything in his house. Horlot's mother threw away him out recklessly.

Vemana was in critical juncture. He could not go anywhere without money. Parents expired. His brother led a large family with hard work. There was no any helping hand or well wisher. All became enemies. Without peace of mind he left the native place. He joined a Gosayi circle known Alehemy they decieved Vemana. At the time of Vemana there were Yogis, Sanyasis, Ascetics and Sadhus wandering all over the country preaching their religious ideologies

and yoga. Naturally Vemana was sensitive and had a divine spark in his heart.

A Hatha yogi attracted him Vemana obediently approached him and joined as his disciple to learn Hatha yoga. Vemana served a long time the Hatha yogi. With disciplined breathing exercises (pranayama) rigorous Asanas and other activities Vemana lost his physical strength and became lean as a patient. He disgusted with the life. Some body told him Hathayoga was the easy way to get miraculous powers with in a short period In the mean while the Hatha yogi eloped with another's wife. Vemana gave up the Hathayoga and came out. Vemana roamed with the wavering mind in the forests and mountains in search of Guru. In that continued journey he met many advanced souls rajayogis, Kundalini yogis and Achala yogis and discussed with them. All enlightened yogis told Vemana who was in search of reality or truth. There was no any mantras or Tantras to attain salvation. This whole universe is God, the power is Goddess. Both are staying in your body happily. God is love and peace. If you want to see them go and serve the Jeeva rasi (Human beings, beasts creatures and other all pranis)

There is no greater than service of Jeeva

Who are you? Who am I?

“Think always about it with purity. You can get self realization at once. In this universe every thing is personification of God. Don't



waste your time control your mind. Go home". Vemana went some where and felt in deep meditation. Vemana experienced in the meditation and attained realization.

" The whole world is my house and I am the world."

### **Self-realization of Sri Vemana**

With self realization Vemana became "Mouni" (dumb) For some time he was in that state. He look like a madman.

Self realization means knowledge of one's own self and of its oneness with God.

The way to higher life leads through the garden of self realization. Life is un ending in its scope and measureless in its expression, Planes of life correspond to various levels of thoughts. Conversely thought is an indicator of the plane of consciousness in which the mind dwells. Life unfolds its wealth and beauty according to the unveiling of progressively higher states of consciousness.

The goal of life of all beings consists in acquiring happiness, peace, satisfaction, security, conscious knowledge, and immortality. These longings for perfection spring from the soul – the image of God that lies buried within us. Thus perfect image of God is trying to manifest in each human life.

The only way to eradicate your imperfections is to unite your isolated human consciousness with the ocean of cosmic

consciousness – God. An individual wave rising out of the ocean is bound by the laws of change. It is born, It lives, it dies. But when the wave realizes that it is but a manifested form of the sea, when it knows that the sea has become that wave and all other waves. When the wave knows that it is the sea, Then it knows that though its form may change it is never lost or annihilated.

#### **VEMANA'S UNIVERSAL MESSAGE**

Vemana did not produce long literary works like those produced by the 'Puranic' or the 'Prabhanda' poets. Nor was he, like them, a profound scholar well versed in grammar and poetics. Yet he wrote great poetry, adopting a simple native meter, 'ataveladi', and in a language that common people spoke in their every day lives.<sup>1</sup> His poetry was the result of his genuine humanism and of his rationalistic approach to all human problems and as such, it has a universal appeal. We can, therefore, rightly place Vemana among the great poets of the world.

Nothing that is narrow. Vemana's poetry transcends time and place. Even though his teachings and critical utterances related to the social, economic and religious problems of his time, there is the quality of universality in them. In spite of differences of nationality, of language, of religion, economic and political institutions, man's fundamental problems are the same every where problems regarding his humanity and the growth of his mind.

What does man need to live a long, happy life? This is not a question of recent times. It arose even when man was in the earliest evolutionary stage. The mental development that modern man has attained is tremendous. He has conquered nature. Time and distance are no longer barrier to him. He is able to move with incredible speed, and is visiting other heavenly bodies. Nothing can check his progress. He goes freely wherever he wants to. Notwithstanding all this wonderful progress, he is not happy, What is the cause? It is not far to seek. His selfishness, his self deception and his indifference are the cause.

Vemana was a humanist, a progressive thinker and a psychologist who could discern the depths of the human heart and mind. Man should exercise his reasoning powers, develop his sense of judgment and perform his duties and responsibilities. He should never forget his humanity and his duties as a human being. This is the substance of Vemana's teachings. The following stanza is remarkable in as much as it contains a true dedicated man.

***“Anyulakunu vachu napada tanadiga***

***Nennuvadu bhuvini nunna vadu”***

“Only that man is a living man who feels the sufferings of his fellow men as his own. And when such a living man meditates upon the meaning of this life and the life hereafter, he becomes a supreme human being. Vemana implies that all the others may be

considered a dead so far as the duty of man as man is concerned. How well he has pointed out man's first duty. What great meaning is contained in four short lines: Unless man cultivates his attitude, he can never solve his problems. There can never be peace and happiness in his life.

Who can overcome fate? There is no help against fate. What man suffers now is the result of his past 'karma'. Nothing can be done to ward off the blows of fate. Things happen according to God's will. The human problem can never be solved, for no sooner is one problem solved than another arises. Who are we, either to help others or to harm them? Such beliefs and questions are frequently given utterance to by our so called philosophers, of whom there are any number in the society of our time. There have been, too, some extreme fatalists who look on calmly doing nothing even when their neighbors are being robbed in front of their eyes. They ascribe everything to man's 'karma' or fate. What sort of men are these pseudo-philosophers?

Vemana was a bitter enemy of this kind of fatalistic philosophy. He was a great optimist and believed in man's creative effort.

***"Bhumilona Puttu bhusara mellaru  
tanuvulona puttu tattvamella  
sramamulona puttru sarvambu tanounu"***

All the articles essential for man's existences have their source in the earth. All philosophies arise out of the human mind. It is human labour that produces everything.

Man's history reveals to us the progress that he has achieved through the ages since the time he was living on trees. We can find there have been incessant efforts at progress in the different fields and in the different stages in his development. Man's will to live better is the one dominant factor that has brought about all revolutions, reforms and scientific inventions and discoveries. He has achieved almost all that he could wish for.

While, on the one hand, man must strive to achieve higher and yet bigger things, he should, on the other hand, always remember his duty as a man. This is the greatest rule of conduct. Man cannot afford to forget that he is a social being. He has to be aware of the inseparable link between his welfare and that of the society in which he lives. Everything in the universe obeys certain natural laws, and man, being the pinnacle of evolution, should not disregard the duties enjoined upon him by his moral sense. If any man looks at other man's wives with lustful eyes, will not his wife be looked at in the same way by other men? If you rob others, it is but just that others should rob you. The golden rule is to consider your neighbor's difficulties as your own and to do what you would want them to do to you. This one principle is enough as foundation

for the creation of a really cultured society. It is utterly useless merely to quote rules of conduct from 'dharma-shastras' in which, very often, principles praised in one place are condemned in another place.

'Dharma' and justice do not originate in books; their real place of origin is the human heart. They depend upon place, time and circumstances. Only that ethical(dharma) is the best which is conducive to the progress and happiness of society.<sup>4</sup> Anything that causes the disintegration of society is 'adharma', even if it is found in the 'dharma shastras'.

There is in our country, no lack of 'dharma shastras', 'niti shastras' and works of good counsel. Most of these books repeat the same things, though indifferent words. And they are: Speak the truth. Do good deeds. Revere your parents and teachers as you would revere the gods. Character is the best of man's adornments. Do not covet others possessions. Do good to others. Maintain your self- respect and dignity – And one can go on adding to this list endlessly.

Though it may be argued that Vemana, too, taught the same things, there is a fundamental differences. There is a certain uniqueness in his telling them. His sayings are full of rationalist thought and a remarkable realism pervades them. One must possess a keen sensibility and a sympathetic understanding to see

the greatness of Vemans's utterances. Look at the following highly thought-provoking and practical suggestion he has given us with regard to speaking the truth :

***"Nijamuladu vani nindinchu jagamella  
nijamuladaradu neechnthonu  
nijamahathmu gooda nijamada Valayura"***

" Mean people look down upon a man who tells truth. Truth must never be spoken when dealing with such people. Tell the truth only when you are in the presence of truthful men." This is very sound, worldly wise advice. We are told how to avoid trouble from hypocrites. I am afraid, people who believe in truth as Harischandra practiced it, will not like what Vemana has said here with regard to truth.

As Dr. C.R. Reddy has said, whenever Vemana was in doubt with regard to the righteousness or otherwise of an action, he did not refer to 'dharma shastras' but applied his naturally unerring commonsense, and took a decision. It was this great poet who set rationalist criticism on its throne.<sup>6</sup> Here is another of Vemana's verses in which he speaks about giving charity.

***"Dosakari yaina doosarikadaina  
pagathudaina veda bahyu daina  
Vatti leni pedavani keedagu neevi"***

During Vemana's time, the disparity between the rich and the poor was very great. The poor had to depend on the rich for their

existence and they invariably lived in misery. But the rich people, in accordance with the injunctions in the 'Dharma Shastras', gave charity only to the high-caste people and those were always Brahmins. And even among the Brahmins only certain sects were worthy of receiving charity. It was immaterial whether the recipient was really in need or not. It is enough if he belonged to a caste specified in the sacred books. And even that charity was done for prestige. It was mere showing off. Both the giver and the receiver were hypocrites. It was like a game. We see this sort of game being played even today. We very rarely find a sincerely generous person.

Vemana's heart was filled with genuine love for the poor. There was no vagueness in his statement. His ideas are to the hearts of thoughtful people as the sun's rays are to the lotus.

He asked the rich to give relief to those who starved, who ever they might be. The starving must be fed, whether they were good or bad, high-caste or low-born, friends or foes; even if they were 'chandalas'(untouchables). A rich person, however worthy he may be, by virtue of his birth, does not deserve charity, Vemana declared.

Vemana's heart went out to the indigent, and his words are full of significance. One must have a really feeling heart to understand their full import. We thus see that Vemana was a great humanist and a sincere friend of the poor.



“Give freely to the starving poor and save their lives. Love all living beings. The ‘jeeva’ is God. Man is born to live, to live long and in peace and happiness, and not to die soon because one has to die sometime or other. He adage: ( He who is born has to die) should not be misunderstood. Its purpose is that we should live without fear of death. It does not mean that are should think of death constantly and die long before death actually comes. If man had given way to despair because death was inevitable, what could he have achieved? There would have been not progress of any kind. It is a truism to say that man has to die sooner or later. But he has to live happily and peacefully as long as he lives. He should not suffer injustice in spirit of fatalistic resignation. The good things of life produced by his labour are meant for him, too, not only for the affluent.

They should be shared by all. Such is Vemana’s practical philosophy, born out of his humanism. The rich in his days lived most selfish lives thinking that the poor suffered as a result of their past ‘karma’, and that it was but just punishment. They did not feed the hungry even though they had plenty of food, They were indifferent spectators of misery, starvation and death. Addressing such heartless rich men, Vemana said:

***“Jeevi pokamunde Jeeva vasthuvu lichchi  
Jeevi nilupa valayu Jeevanamuna  
Jeevi tholagu venuka Jeeva vasthuvu lela”***

“ Give the life-sustaining things when there is life in the body. No charity can help once the life ceases. Of what avail can the good things of life(Jeeva Vastuvulu) be after death? This is the direct question that Vemana put to the indifferent rich of his time. Even today this is the most pressing of man's problems all over the world.

Vemana's message, therefore, is for the entire humanity. He has taught us what man's highest duty is, and reminded us again and again that our welfare is dependent on how well we perform this duty. A similar philosophy is the basis of all Tolstoy's novels and short stories. Vemana was a believer in one God, a great humanist and a practical philosopher. There is no ambiguity anywhere in his writings.

### **Historical Back-ground of Sri Vemana**

Kakateeya Kingdom was established in 13th century, by Ganapathi Deva Raya. It was a great remarkable period in the history of Telugu country. The entire Telugu land was under his rule.

The difference between Andhra and Telugu was avoided and a special name was coined as " Trilinga Dharneetalam" In this time Mahakavi Tikkana completed his writing of " Mahabharata". In those days there was intercaste marriages in the famous Raja, Veera,

Brahman, Kamma, Kapu and other castes. There was a "Nayamkara prabhu system" established in the leadership of above-mentioned Nayakas of Kakateeya emperors. Induluri Annaya manthri, kolani Rudradevudu and other Brahmana warriors were ministers. The Ministers and kings were all saivas. The difference between saiva and Vaishnava were avoided. All were united. Ganapathi Deva's favourite poet Tikkana worshipped Hariharanatha a new diety. The Jaina religion, which was against Vedic religion, was eradicated in his period. This nayankara system unitedly attacked the invasions of Delhi Sultans till the time of prataparudra. In 1723 prataprudra was defeated by Delhi Sultans and Kakateeya Empire declined. In 1347 the South Indian Muslim Kings captured Delhi and established various Bahmani kingdoms. Nayankara system divided with the difference of various Nayakas. Popular Reddies occupied the kingdom of Kondaveedu, Harihara and Bukkaraya occupied the Vijayanagara kingdom. Some of the coastal and Telangana areas were handed over by the kapaya and prolaya nayakas.

There were STRUGGLES between the kings and competitions in patronising the poets and pandits. Regarding the unwholesome relations with Bahamani sultans and the differences struggles were raised. This period was called Golden age for fine arts. Many poets and pandits were patronised by the rulers. KavisarvaBhouma

Srinatha and other poets were honoured in their "Asthana". The famous Bhakthi poet puthana rejected the patronisation of kings and led his life as a farmer.

Sayana and Vidyaranya the Gurus of Vijayanagara kings wrote commentaries on Upanishads. By the influences of Vaishnavacharyas of South India the kings of Vijayanagara converted from Saivism to Vaishnavism. Sri Krishnadevaraya wrote a Vaishnava prabandha named "Amuktha Malyada".

The kings of Vijayanagar maintained good friendship for some time with Bahmani sultans. Krishna devaraya the yavana rajyasthapanacharya with the friendship of Golkonda Nawabs ruled the country peacefully. Fine arts like literature, music, sculptures were nourished. "The religion of sword" Islam had taken a peaceful harmonious nature with the effect of Sufi culture.

Many Urdu, Arabic poets of medieval ages wrote poems about freedom of thought, religious tolerance, worship of nature's beauty, ecstasy of life and the superiority of human being. The Sufi poets mingled with Hindu poets. Mohammed Khuli kutubshahi in the 16th century, Nadrudin Mohammad in the beginning of 18th century, Wali Mohammad 1667-1741 Meer Taqi Meer (1713-1830) and several other poets wrote progressive and inspiring verses. ("Indian Literature-Meer Taqi Meer" an essay written by a Soviet writer E.P. Chelvashvili)

In between 1675 to 1800 Rayalaseema was under the rule of Nawabs and poligars. Besides Madhura and Tanjavoor also in the same condition. Madhura kings were also responsible for the downfall of Vijayanagara Empire.

Within a short timeMohammadans occupied Madhura. After the death of Venkatapathi Rayalu in 1614Chnadragiri Throne was occupied by Raghunadha rayalu. Raghunatha Rayalu showed special interest in fine arts literature, music, sculptures and arts. He himself was a poet. Rangajamma a notable poetess was his darling. He had a good taste of beauty with acsthetic sense. He patronised many dancers in his Janana. Radhika Santwanamu a masterpiece written by Muddupalani a famous telugu poetess. Tupakula Ananta Bhupaludu a popular prose writer was also in his court.

In 1633 Son of Raghunatharayalu became king of Tanjavoor. He was a notorious politician. He collected tax violently from starving peasants. In 1662 there was a serious famine in the area. He had no even religious- patience. As a Veeravaishnava he forced cruelly the people who belonged to other religions for conversion of religion. In 1675 Maharastra king Venkoji brother of Sivaji occupied Tanjavoor. At that time Abdul Hasan Kuthubsha ruling Golkonda (1658-1687). Tanisha who was former to Kutub Sha was requested

by English businessmen for shelter to stay for their safety. Aurangzeb invaded Golconda in 1687 and captured it.

After getting victory on Golconda Aurangzeb lived nearly 20 years. But he failed to establish peace in the kingdom and at paraganas. There was no law and order. People have no security for their lives and properties. As the result of the previous wars there were disturbances and chaos. In this critical period small rulers, Samanths, Zamindars and Jaggeerdars revolted against the government.

Afterwards the kingdom of Nizam came into light and within a short period fell down. Zamindars were remained. After Tipu Sultan's death Rayala Seema was occupied by Nizam Nawab. Though the Britishers entered into the Andhra area in 1611 but it took long time to 200 years to occupy the entire Andhra land. The disturbances and crisis which are arisen after the down fall of Vijayanagara empire stopped. The whole Andhra area came under the British rule.

### **17th century the period of crisis.**

The 17th century was an agitated and disturbed period of Indian History. With the downfall of Vijayanagara Empire many bad conditions were taken place. The Mohammadan rule was gradually extending. Bijapur and Golconda Nawabs occupied many parts of the Vijayanagara kingdom. In 1570 Vijayanagara kingdom was

divided into three parts. Sri Rangarayalu ruled Telugunadu one of the three parts as the penugonda capital city. As SriRangapatnam capital Ramarayalu ruled another part. Venkatapathi Rayalu ruled some area in Tamilnadu and some part in Rayala seema. His capital city was Chandragiri.

After declining the first two parts Venkatapathi rayalu ruled 1586 to 1614. Then he died. Afterwards there were many struggles for the throne of Chandragiri in between hereditary kinsmen. Vijayangara empire completely disappeared around 1675 without no single reminder. Less or more in the same period in 1687 the Golkonda kingdom also destroyed. Aurangazeb occupied Golkonda.

In those days whoever may be on throne in capital cities the local rulers like Samanthas, poligars and chotanawabs had authority to command on villages. Though the chittur and cuddapah districts under Golkonda Nawabs the village level rulers were poligars. They were violently and cruelly collecting the excess revenue from the village farmers. Cuddapah Nawab ruled Madanapalle, Voyalpadu and Punganoor Talukas. The remaining areas were ruled by Arcot Nawab under the kingship of Golkonda Nawabs. After the down fall of Golkonda kingdom Nellore also has gone into the Arcot nawabs.

These Nawabs are all rulers of Durgas. Durga means fort. They want power. in the village and Taluka level rulers were all

local persons. Chiefly poligars, In those days some of the Nawabs good-natured and had religious patience. They were far from these political, religious disturbances. But they were unable to control the poligars and landlords violent activities in the villages and Talukas. Poor peasants and suppressed classes were suffered too much by those immoral commanders. Now and then whenever they were in need of money become decoits and gang robbers to loot the villages mercilessly. Vemana observed all these incidents. As a people's poet he was always on the side of poor people. He abused the rulers as cowards, impotents, cheaters and hypocrites. There was a talk in 1746 Maharstra military commander Murari Rao occupied the Gooty, Tadipatri and penugonda areas and suppressed the brutal poligars and village rulers. In those days there was no safety and security to the lives and properties of poor we can see the actual pictures in Vemana Verses. Vemana divided the rulers in three varieties. (1) Cowards or impotents (2) Criminals, sinners or evil doers (3) Innocents or ignorants.

In the words of Vemana they are not helpless, supporters or saviours. For the sake of name they are rulers. When the enemies invade on the villages the rulers and poligars run away from the field. When there was no settled administration and every Kavalgar or poligar or even a village munsiff became a law unto himself grabbing rent free lands or temple properties with impurity,



encroaching on common lands for private profit. The angry saint spoke out without fear or favour. He was in deed the tribunal of the people.

Those poligars now and then invades like bandits robbed the neighbour villages to loot their wealth ruthlessly. There was no peace and security to the villagers. Some of the rulers were cowards. They were unable to protect people's lives and wealth. They were only for the namesake. Vemana condemned and abused these impotent rulers in his verses.

" For their belly's sake these bandits loot lands sickling the poor in hamlet most wretched bands Death's head will definitely sack these bands listen to Vema, spokes man of 'Vox populi'.<sup>13</sup> Bringing all lands under one yoke of care who shall be the ruler for the poor to love and bear can any man fit to be called a king even be? Listen to Vema spokesmn of 'Vox populi'.<sup>14</sup> Seeing the foe and his force, if the fellow takes to his heels, as a coward most shallow who can stop, as death in agner will follow? Lisen to Vema pokes man of 'Voxpopuli'.<sup>15</sup> When a coward is made a commander in war he will take to his heels and war he will mar can that man be entrusted that role in war listen to Vema spokesman of 'Vox populi'.<sup>16</sup>

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### **Chapter III**

## **THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF SRI VEMANA**

70



Indian colleagues. While the Indian merchants remained commission agents and compradores. The European counterparts forged ahead in primitive accumulation and innovative production, techniques. Science and technology gave the Europeans enormous superiority over the Asiatics. Bhakthi cult, Sufeism, Din-i-Elahi, Sikhism and several sects of eclectic thinkers arose at this critical period to loosen the chains of superstitions to integrate society, to bring about social harmony, between castes and religions. This humanist movement was necessary in the context of social tensions in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century.

It was against superstitions, religious fanaticism, social oppression and political disposition the poets and saints gave expression to the inherent need for social harmony, to alleviate suffering of the lower castes and to release the creative energies of all sections of society for further progress.

The movement articulated in religious forums, the silent sufferings of the wretched of the earth, but the ruling classes never relaxed their hold on the masses for fear of losing their privileges. The doctrine of Karma seems to have re-enforced its stranglehold on the mind of the masses despite the humanist movement of Bhakthi and Sufism. It was the failure of this spiritual renaissance that Vemana perceived with righteous indignation. He was the most virulent critic of the octopus grip of the statuesque. He rejected the

feudal ideology, Kabir Panthis, Sikhs, Jots, Fazaris, Wahabis, Sannyasis and Fakirs all these sects were the off-shoots of the new trends, and did not hesitate to fight for their rights with guns and swords in the eighteenth century. Both the Marathas and Sikhs were up in arms against Mughal tyranny, religious teachings offered them an ideology to fight for Swarajya and Khalsa.

While the peasants were subjects to feudal oppression in the villages coupled with caste taboos and restrictions the artisans had not yet become independent enough to own their own means of production and eke out their livelihood; caste exclusiveness, upper caste coercions and exortions dogged their footsteps wherever they settled. The mechanical skills of the craftsman did not receive the encouragement and reward and remuneration to provide stimulus for innovation and invention. It was this inarticulate desire that the saint poets like Vemana expressed in their protests and criticism: some of the new techniques of production like carpet weaving, seed making, the mortar manufacture and architectural models were introduced by the Persians. They were pioneers of urbanisation based on new production techniques. But the caste exclusiveness of the rural society the feudal inhibitions in the village communities were obstacles in the way of new productive forces.

The old exploiting classes defended their customary privileges and imposed taboos on Hindus. Most of the sailors were Arabs and

Europeans. To release the society from medieval restrictions there was need for a new ideology. The common peasants also suffered from the oppression of the ruling classes which redoubled their exploitation, and exacted a high proportion of the surplus produce of the peasants and artisans. Both the Muslim Iktadars and Jaagirdars and Hindu Mokhasdars and Watandars had a vested interest in the status while the artisans and poor peasants wanted to break out of the old structure and improve their conditions.

The Bhakthi poets appealed for universal love, compassion and brotherhood in the context of this situation. Sufism among muslims Bhakthi poets among Hindus and Sikhs aimed at the creation of a new harmony in the name of God, but it was an uphill task in the face of an old craft by class of priests buttressed by the ruling warriors. In the face of this rigidity and ruthless conservation on the part of the richer classes, Vemana raised his voice against oppression and took the side of the poorer sections of society. In the course of this quest he could see that wealth was the bedrock of all civilisation whoever wanted salvation should work hard and acquire wealth by hard work Vemana preached.

Poverty he looked upon as a curse. He said in his verses,

“Poverty is like wild fire. It destroys both the person and those who approach him. Even to think of poverty is a sin. It is<sup>1</sup> therefore the duty of every man to acquire wealth”.



Again Vemana emphasised "The source of all things is effort" Vemana often reiterated and asked his peasant followers to be free from indebtedness to desist from extravagance to set their face against bonded labourer and to breakout of the mental<sup>2</sup> cobwebs that clouded their vision.

The Bhakthi Saint poets, Sufisaints, and a Sikh gurus were playing an anti feudal role in their time. In stressing the economic factor, the materialist basis of caste and the need for charity and even resistance to oppression for redistribution of wealth, in short socio-economic justice, Vemana played a more concrete fearless Protestant role than all other contemporary co thinkers and pioneers of Indian awakening. With all his 17<sup>th</sup> century limitations Vemana displayed the insight of a geneous in interpreting the social structure and stands head and shoulders over all other social reformers of India at the dawn of modern period.

### **Social Philosophy**

According to M.Pattabhi Rami Reddy The age of Vemana witnessed the disintegration of the Vijayanagara empire and the raise and fall of the Qutub shahi kingdom in the seventeenth century. The fall of Vijayanagar empire created a political vaccum in South India. Two hundred poligars and Amarnayaks dominated the political and socio-economic life of the people. The Telugu poligars, Deshmukhs and Deshpandes accepted the suzerainty of the

Qutubshahis of Golkonda and co-operated with the muslim ruling class in the administration of the Telugu region. The Qutubshahis created an atmosphere of conciliation and pacified the old ruling class by appointing telugu landlords as Deshmukhs and Deshapandes especially for the collection of land revenue and granted them inams (land grants) in the numerous villages. The village communities were permitted to enjoy their customary privileges, in the matter of land control. The Muslim nobles, the persian money lenders and pathan speculators shared the surplus produce of the peasants along with the Hindu Deshamukhs, Deshpandes and merchant-speculators. The peasant paid fifty per cent of the produce as land revenue. The upper caste land lords not only occupied the best lands, but also privileged land holdings and rent free Inamas and vatans which enabled them to live in comfort.

The Qutubshahis maintained a military establishment of foudars and havalgars in Sarkars and Paraganas who safeguarded the fiscal interests of the ruling dynasty and observed a secular policy of respecting the religious endowments and temples and making grants of funds to both temples and masques. This policy of promoting religious harmony conciliating the subject people who actively participated in the administration at all levels, won the respect of the villagers to the Muslim saints (sufis). The villagefolk venerated the Muslim pirs and celebrated festivals (urs) with great

enthusiasm. Madanna and Akkanna rose to the highest ministerial position in the Qutub shahi kingdom. Their policy of Hindu-Muslim unity and friendship with Sivaji roused the anger jealousy of the Mughal emperor Aurangajeb. A faction of the Golkonda nobles joined hands with the Moghal ruling class and brought about a conspiracy which resulted not only in the assassination of Madanna and Akkanna but also the final fall of the Qutubshahi rule and the rise of the Mughal supremacy (1687-1724) in Andhra. It is quite possible that Vemanna witnessed the decline of the Moghal supremacy and the vanishing fortunes of the Mughal warrior, the Pattan speculators and Persian nobles. The following verse indicates the decadence of the ruling class at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the Mughal nobles joined the ranks of other poor ryots or degenerated as mercenary cavalrymen of the local Zamindars, Poligars and Jaagirdars.

The Shaiks, Sayyads Mughals who were served in ruling classes in the beginning after their decadence they became as workers and mingled with our formers.<sup>1</sup>

Observing the toils and tribulations of the mass of the peasants in the villages Vemana denounced the ruling classes with bell, book and candle. Just like the people around him he was deeply disillusioned with the rulers who robbed the people of their

surplus produce and caused untold miseries. Vemana said : Never trust the tribe of rulers<sup>2</sup> where poligars often indulged in banditry private wars, mutual Vendetta and exhibited their illgotten wealth with all the paraphernalia of degenerate monarchs. As in the Rayalasuma of the 18<sup>th</sup> century there was ubiquitous anarchy and the lives and properties of the poor peasants were at the mercy of every petty tyrant in the villages. No wonder Vemana told the people that they couldnot expect protection from such venomous snakes. It required the courage, conviction and the insight of a genius to spread such ideas of protest among the people. It was a call for not only a protest and remonstrance but also an expression of no confidence in the existing ruling class. We seldom come across saints and scholars of medieval India who condemned the ruling class with such Vehemence and courage.

When there was no settled administration and every Kavalgar or poligar or even a village Munisff became a law unto himself grabbing rent free lands, or temple properties with impunity encroaching on common lands for private profit, the angry saint spoke out without fear or favour. He was indeed the tribunal of the people.

***“For their belly’s sake these bandits loot hands  
Sickling the poor in most wretched bonds  
Deaths head will definitely sack these bonds Listen to Vema....<sup>3</sup>***

***Bringing all lands under one Yoke of care  
Who shall be the ruler for the poor to love and bear  
Can any man fit to be called a king ever be? Listen to Vema.....<sup>4</sup>***

***He who seeks for a king, having his hand  
Shall fall a prey to curse of his own band  
How for will a fall jump with no fall on the land  
Listen to Vema <sup>5</sup>***

***Seeing the foe and his force if the fellow  
Takes to his heels as a coward most shallow  
Who can stop as death in anger will follow? <sup>6</sup>***

***When a coward is made a commander in war  
He will take to his heels and war he will mar  
Can that man be entrusted what role in war listen to Vemana <sup>7</sup>***

Vemana had an inkling of the curse of exploitation and the sufferings of the poor. It was the parasitic rich and powerful people. Who by hook or crook amassed wealth whom Vemana cursed. They were the rulers but they were not able to protect the people. They did not deserve to be entrusted with political power, who ran away in the face of dangers and seldom safeguarded the interests of the weak and poor people. Sri Pattabhi Rami Reddy continued the essay. Although Vemana had renounced worldly life he did not teach the people the advantages of such life without wealth and its uses. On the other hand he tried to bring home to the peasants the need for self-reliance and self sufficiency in the matter of money. He often emphasised the misery caused by lack of wealth,

indebtedness and poverty, and exhorted every body to earn wealth and use it for charity and good of the fellow beings.

“All that is born on the earth was born in the earth. All reality is born in the body. The great whole is produced from toil. Let us ourselves become that mighty whole.”<sup>8</sup>

Shall those who while they have wealth labour and toil and on happy days bestow on others what they ask shall these be called hard men <sup>9</sup>

Those were the days where the poets were in the courts of the kings enjoying riches and pomp and writing the “prabandhas.”

The society was divided and sub-divided into thousands of castes. The upper caste people were enjoying privileges. There was a huge gulf between the upper caste people and lower caste people and between the poor and the rich. The doctrine of “Karma” seems to have reinforced its strangle-hood on the minds of masses. Vemana raised his voice against oppression and took the side of poorer sections of the society. He rejected feudal ideology and was the most virulent critic of the octopus grip of the statusquo. He was the poet of the people and was the foremost ana-Baptist, the pioneer of the social Protestantism and morning star of our reformation.

He created awareness among the people in the society towards the exploitation of the feudal land lords and the religious

people of his days. He was a social rebel constantly at war with the upholders of the caste system. He was even more violently opposed to the practice of untouchability, the worst crime of man against man.

His poems are very simple in style with full of practical experience and creative imagination for wit and humour for originality and boldness and expression.

***“Mala vani Nela Mari Mari Nindimpa***

***Odala Nunna MamsaMokati Kade***

***Vani Lonavelugu vani Kulambedi***

***Viswadabhi rama Vinura Vema”<sup>10</sup>***

In the Hindu social system a large number of the castes are outside the four-fold hierarchical varna division of the society. These exterior castes comprise a number of untouchable castes whose physical contact is regarded as ritually polluting by the clean interior castes and who are by and large economically the poorest section of the countries population. They were despised as a menial group and were assigned the lowest kind of occupations such as scavenging, leather work, removal of carrion etc. As they were following such menial occupations they were looked down upon as impure group and contact with them was defiling.

According to the poet Kavichoudappa,

***"Vanaku Thadiyani Varunu  
Punika Vemanna cheta Boliyanivarun  
Nana dikkula Vedakina  
Kanam Vanantha vani kavichowdappa"***

His poems are well known to literates, illiterates and one and all in the four directions of the Telugu world. All are wet in the rain, nobody is free from rain, all are well-versed with Vemana's poetry.

At this Juncture Vemana stood on the side of the untouchables and appealed and argued on behalf of them.

In the above poem Vemana appealed the people with scientific knowledge that every human being has the same flesh and blood, there is no difference between the Mala and the Brahmin and then why do you scold him?

What about the soul in him? The Soul is indestruble, Imminent, omnipotent, and nothing could rend it, wet it, dry it mechless defile it.

At all times the Brahmins had endeavoured to keep them segregated not only from Hindu Religion and the Hindu ceremonial, they were not allowed to hear, muchters study the Vedas. They must not enter the temples. They must carry on all ceremonies without using the mantras and no Brahmin would carry out dry dynastic ceremony for them.



Untouchability refers to denying even human status to a group of human-beings indeed. This group is not even allowed the consideration which be shown to creatures like animals. They suffered oppression at the hands of the upper castes for centuries, their economic condition was extremely depressed, they were educationally backward and they lacked political skills to hold their own against the upper caste leadership of the country. In short so they were required to live in a separate colony outside the village. They were kept in a distance and were not allowed to touch or to be touched by the high caste people. The practice of such an extreme form of untouchability was dry, the belief that even the mere proximity and sight of such people would cause defilement and destroy the purity. They were subjected to monstrous humiliations and disabilities. They were not allowed to use the public wells, ponds, temples, thorough fares and meeting places because their use would defile even these inanimate objects. They were forced to filthy modes of life, dirty occupations and unhygienic food had made these people were prevented from making certain types of transactions with different castes

***"MALA Mamsamu dina Mahi Meeda Janulella  
Kovvu Thavaledo korke deera  
Kulamulanni akka Kulamuga deliyadi'  
ViswadabhiRama Vinuravema"***

According to Vemana all castes are only one caste. The eating of the flesh of the cow reduced the status of the malas, and Madigas to untouchables, what about those people who eat the fat of the cow in the form of ghee? The Mala eats the flesh of the cow, the brahmin and others are eating the fat of the cow. We can not differentiate the men only on the basis of eating. After all we are all human beings and our caste is Human caste

***"Kasuvu Neri thima pasaramunudina  
Maladandru Vani Mahini Janulu  
Pandi Kodi dinna Pragnudanduru Janul  
ViswadaBhi Rama Vinura Vema"<sup>11</sup>***

Vemana's sympathies were on the side of the Malas and Madigas who are untouchables in the Hindu society basing on eating the flesh of the cows, and oxen. He condemned the inhuman attitude of the branhmins and other varna people in the Hindu society and argued on behalf of the Malas and Madigas they only for eating the flesh of the animal which eat grass they are kept away from the society, what about those people who eat pork and chicken? They eat human waste. Whether they are (Pragnulu) the gentlemen

***"Mala Vani Nanti Mari' Neella Munigeru  
Mala Karma Chetha Mala dayye  
Yela theliya lero EENarapasuvulu  
Viswadabhi Rama Vinura Vema"<sup>12</sup>***

The Malas, Madigas and some other exterior castes form as untouchables outside the pole of traditional four fold varna, because of their deeds in the previous birth, says the Doctrin of Karma. If the Mala was born as mala with the mala karma, the upper caste man considered to be a human beast should know the secret of the Doctrin of Karma and should not touch him and should not dip in the waters to remove the touch that defiled him.

***"Vuri vari Kella Nokka Kanchamu Petti  
pother gudipi kulamu poliyajesi  
thalanu cheyi petti thaganamma Jepparo  
viswadabhi Rama Vinura Vema"***<sup>13</sup>

The varna Vyavastha is the root cause for all these sufferings in the society. These castes are the outcome of the typical social organisation in Indian society which is based on caste and centuries of customs and traditions which have been signed a certain section of society stone low social and economic status by virtue of which they had been exploited denied access to education lived in poverty and had inherited an occupation which they could not change, thus they belonged to a category of people who had faced several centuries of social disabilities and had been prevented from rising up the social ladder.

Vemana requested to annihilate the caste system and give food in a plate uniformly without caste restrictions and swear not to follow the system.

***"Kulamu Hetchu Thaggu godavalu paniledu  
Sanu jathamayye sakalakulamu  
Hetchu thaggu Mata Letlerunga vatchu  
Viswdabhi Rama Vinura vema"***<sup>14</sup>

According to the varnavyavastha ladder one caste is superior to the other caste. Vemana says that we need not account for the caste whether it is superior or inferior. Our caste is only one caste that is human caste. We are all human beings and so we are equal.

The Hindu society was divided into four varnas (1) Brahmana (2)Kshatriya (3)Vysya and (4) Suudra. At the top of the ladder Brahmin stands, next kshatriya, vysya, and at the bottom (4) Shudra. Later these castes were, divided and sub divided into thousands of castes on the basis of one caste being superior to another, one is inferior to the other

***"Mala Mala gadu Mahimeeda Ne proddu  
Mata thirugu Vadu Mala gaka  
Vani mala yanna Vadapo Penumala  
Viswa dabhi Rama Vinuma Vema"***<sup>15</sup>

That man is a Mala who does not keep his word. Vemana calls such a man as penumala, who calls the Mala as Mala.

In the Hindu society the Malas and Madigas are looked down upon and attached untouchability to them.

Vemana in a fit of anger calls him "Penumala".

***"Madiga yana gane Mari thakku vanduru  
Madiga Ila surala Mama gade?  
Madi ge kanu Bidda Mana Yarundhathi gade?  
viswadabhi Rama VinuraVema"***<sup>16</sup>

Why do you look down upon Madiga? What is his status? He is the father -in-law of vasistha the guru of Brahmins and the Father of Arundhathi. The Brahmins are said to be gods on earth and they have to be respected and honour like the gods because they have the second place next to gods.

***Mala vani Nanti Mari Neeta Munigeru  
Katikegu Napudn Kalchu Mala;  
Appudantina Yantu Ippu dendegeo  
Veswadabhrama Vinura Vema"***<sup>17</sup>

To remove the pollution of touch of a Mala, you dip in the water. The mala will cremate you in the burial ground. What happens to you how can you clean his touch at the time of cremation you believe in the diction of Karma that a Mala or a Madiga is born as untouchable due to the deeds of the previous birth. Now you have not cleansed the touch of Mala, perhaps you will definitely be born as Mala or Madiga, says Vemana.

***"Thalli Vurvasi Lanja Thanayalu Madiga  
Thanu Brahma danuta Thagune Jagathi  
Vasista Kulamani Vasudhalo nerugara  
Viswadabhi Rama Vinura Vema"***<sup>18</sup>

Vemana Criticizes the Brahmin caste, and its origin who are said to be superior in the caste hierarchy. Who is the mother of Vasistha?

She is the Prostitute in the paradise. His wife is Arundhati the daughter of the Mathanga Rishi (sage) who is untouchable by birth. Why do they pride for their caste. The world will know that the brahmins belong to the caste of Vasistha. In this poem we observe that Vemana is well versed in Vedas and Vedic literature and asked the people not to give respect to such a caste, which is said to be very low according to its origin.

#### **On Brahmins:**

Vemana scoffs of the birth of the brahmin sages.

***"Koudinyudu Munda Koduku  
Mandavyudu Kappa Koduku MahitloButten  
Chenda Mathanga Mouniki pindamby  
Pattaeda Pridhivini Vema"<sup>19</sup>***

Sage koundinya was born to a widow sage Mandavya was born to a Manduka (prog), the sage Mathanga was born in the form of Embryo on earth.

***Kadupeda para-saryudu chedu mangaritha  
Kadupuna chelaga Janichen vadi  
Vedavyasudunu Vembadi  
daniki Jatha mayye Padiga Vema"<sup>20</sup>***

The sage Parasara was born to a prostitute. Vedavyasa was born to Parasara

***"Chakalidaniki puttenu, chkionopo  
Naradundu Cheppaganela Loka loka mulella  
Nekamuga rudhikekke Nerugave Vema"***<sup>21</sup>

The well known sage Narada was born to a washer woman.

***"Shrawnaguru uasudha kukkaku  
Vasishtudu voorvasikini Jani Inchen  
Bal asaha Gowthama Munijun  
Posaganga makara, kilanu buttenu vema"***<sup>22</sup>

The sage Saunaka was born to a dog (bitch), Vashista was born to voorvasi, sage Gowthama was born to a Crocodile.

***"Ituvanti Rishi Kulambuna chedu tharamuga buttinathi  
Bapana varal kutilambugaka lokanu  
Yatu bramha kulam Janana Magun Vema"***<sup>23</sup>

Why should the brahmins boast of their caste as superior to other castes? These people kept secret, the origin of birth and gotras. How they became brahmins?

***"Chiluka garbhamandu chelagi shukudu putte,  
Marala Jathamayye khim Mukilanu  
Itti Rishi kulambu Nenchage Paniledu  
Viswada bhi Rama Vinara Vema"***<sup>24</sup>

Sage Shuka was born to a parrot. We need not account for this caste of Rishis.

***"Brahma Raja vysya paraga Shudrulu mari  
Brahma Vishnu Nrupathi Vasuvulenna  
Brahmanu theliyaka Bahu rupu let lieri  
Viswadabhi Rama Vinara Vema"***<sup>25</sup>

With out the notice of the originator the Brahma how these castes were divided in to four (1) Brahmana (2) Kshatriya (3) Vysya and (4) Shudra castes?

***"Udayamandu Studrudu utha mothamudetlu  
Sathiki Shudrathanamu Sarvadam  
Thalli shudruralu thanetlu brahma dow  
Vishwadibhi Rama Vinara Vema"***<sup>26</sup>

It is belived "Janmana Jayathe Shudra". By birth each and every one is Shudra. How can a man be born to a Shudra (that is a woman who is said to be Shudra) is a brahmin?

**On Vysyas:**

***"Raja Samithikella Rampamul Vy synlu  
Judagandla Kadi Judagandlu  
Yochananu deliyarn yurakanardhapeksha  
Viswadahi Rama Vinura Vema"***<sup>27</sup>

The Vysyas are the saws in the Assembly of kings (causing decissions). These are the thieves, gamblers of the gamblers. They know not counsel but shift in their eagerness for wealth

***"Komati Madigoru Kshamame Yelledala,  
Vydyudorula Kepudu Vyadhi goru,  
Vara VANTHA Dhaniku Chradeyaga goru  
Viswadabhi Rama Vinura Vema"***<sup>28</sup>



Komati always wants famine in the area for his profits. The doctor always desires diseases to the people and villages and a prostitute wants to approach the rich for their needs.

***Visvasa ghathakulu Mari, Vysyulu  
Memeyanuchu vanthulu balike  
Nanyari Labhakarulu Viswamulo  
Dongalanaga Velasiri vema.<sup>29</sup>***

They are faithless, profitors they are the thieves on the earth.

***"Raja samithi kella Rampamul Vysyulu  
Judagandla kadi judagandlu  
Yochanam deliyaru yaraka Naradha peksha  
Viswadabhi Rama Vinara Vema"<sup>30</sup>***

The Vysyas (Merchants) are the saws in the Assembly of kings (causing decisions) these are the thief gamblers of gamblers. They know not counsel but shift in their eagerness for wealth.

#### **On Shudras:**

***"Shudra yuvathi Koduku Shudhantha rangudai  
Veda Vedy maina padu thelipi  
Brahma Padaviganna brahmana grajudaye  
Viswadabhi Rama Vinura Vema"<sup>31</sup>***

Vedavyasa was the son of Matchyagandhi, a shudra woman, who learnt Vedas and got perfection and became Bramha

***"Shudra Shudrulanchu shudrulabonadu,  
Shudra Mathamu thammu juttu snaga  
Manaru shudhi leka Mari dvijudet lounu  
Viswadabhi Rama Vinuravima"<sup>32</sup>***

A brahmin with impurity of mind look down up on Shudras and condemned the shudra caste. How is a brahmin with impurity in heart tells that he is dwija?

***"Shudru Lanuchu bhuvini shudrula bonadu  
Malakante nokadu mulayagune  
dvijuda nenatanna dvejudu kanerchune  
Viswadabhi Rama Venura Vema"***<sup>33</sup>

The brahmin who looks down up on the Shudras without purity in heart and soul is inferior to a mala. If he tells us that he is dvija. Whether such man is dwija?

***Veda viprulella visyopakarambu  
Sakshimannavadu Jagathilona  
Sankarakula dvijul sarvoktu lavudura  
Viswadabhi Rama Vinura Vema"***<sup>34</sup>

Really, see the welfare of the people. If the brahmins who are of mixed origin are great?

***Shudra Shudra lanuchu Shudrula bonadu  
Shudra mathamu thammu Chuttukonaga  
Manasusuddhidhileka Maridhviju detlounu  
Viswa dabhi Rama Vinura Vema"***<sup>35</sup>

Why do you look down upon the Shudras without attaining purity? Without pure heart you are not a Brahmin.

***Shudru lanuchu bhuvini shudrula bonadu  
Malakanna duduku mahini ledu  
Narakamunakunegu Nashtamaina venuka  
Viswadabhi Rama Vinura vema"***<sup>36</sup>

Those brahmins who look down up on the shudras as inferiors certainly go to hell after his death. They are inferiors to a mala.

**A brief sketch on ideology of Vemana about Women welfare:**

- (1) Vemana blamed the profession of prostitution with righteous anger for the welfare of women folk.
- (2) He condemned money dealings in marriage alliances
- (3) He rejected child and old marriages
- (4) He suggested people follow the age limits in marriage alliances
- (5) The man must protect his family and wealth even to sacrifice his life.
- (6) In emergency women should react on wicked persons for their self protection.
- (7) Women should maintain the honour of the family with their righteous behaviour
- (10) Regarding marriages Vemana appealed to the rich to give their daughters to the poor to eradicate poverty through the marriage alliances.
- (11) Man should think woman as his mother, sister, daughter and well-wisher

(12) Poets and singers should not describe the parts of the body of women and their beauty.

(13) We consider God and Goddess our father and mother. Is it justifiable to describe their romance and lustful activities in songs?

Many scholars, thinkers and writers like Rallapalli, Tripuraneni, V.R.Narla, Dr.N. Gopi and others say that Vemana was against women (Misogymist). The writers of Veswakavi Viplavayogi Vemana Vedasastram G. Kenkata Reddy and pochana Reddy were indifferent in this matter. As an ardent social reformer Vemana abused prostitutes who were spoiling the good families and the youth.

Devadasis became dancers in the Vaishnavalayayas, Basivis in Sivalayas. They dedicated their lives to the service of temples by the Acharyas and their guardians. In course of time they became prostitutes for their liveli-hood. Vemana saw the picture of society with many evils. He became angry and agitated. He wanted the husbands who had illegal contacts with the prostitutes not caring their wives.

***"It's fool that leaves his own wife at home  
And goes away to seek a harlots dome;  
Isn't a like gathering gleans leaving ripe cornfields?  
Listen to Vema Spokesman to 'Vox populi' 37***

He requested husbands to lead a peaceful appy life with their wives.

In his view woman is mother.

***"He that knows his mother known the deity.  
He that knows earth knows heaven  
He that knows, heaven and earth  
Knows himself"***<sup>38</sup>

"In his view the wife is goddess who is amicable and virtuous. The house is a holy temple. He admired yoga in "family" than yoga in "ascetic."

If the husband is honoured by the people the wife also will be honoured if the husband is wicked that bad effect also falls on woman.<sup>39</sup>

Vemana argued on behalf of women. There were many proverbs insulting the woman in our ancient literature one of them is "woman is the route to hell. Our epics and mythologies were made women as slaves to their families and tied them with ropes.

Physically man is stronger than woman. The society has given him such a freedom to enjoy the pleasures. Women are facing unbearable troubles and sorrows. There is no sympathy, compassion towards women folk Vemana condemned this kind of male superiority.

If we read his verses seriously Vemana was born only to wipe out the tears of the women folk.

"All virtues combined became man and he was produced. All sin combined and woman (fiend) was born. Knowing woman to be evil, yet when ye see her ye fear to abhor her. <sup>40</sup>

Vemana used harsh words about characterless woman only. He always honoured chastity in womanhood.

Vemana says on lustfulness

***"A fly will die in honey for the desire of its taste  
A lust full man will and his life in adultery  
The miser die if some body asks money."<sup>41</sup>***

Tirivalluvar says on womanhood, Chastity is greater than wealth for a woman. One who maintains family status through discharging her duties and responsibilities she will get salvation. The reputation of family depends on housewife. If she is good there will be every thing what she needed. If she is bad the house will become a burial ground.

A henpecked husband is useless. He is coward. He may be an angel who obeys his wife's tender words he will lose his dignity. If a husband is before his wife the family will not prosper. He is unfit for husbandship."

If husband has good behaviour the wife should follow him. Other wise "The wife that answers again to her husband is a bitch. The husband who persists is being coupled with her. <sup>42</sup>

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## **Chapter IV**

# **ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHY OF SRI VEMANA**

Vemana could see through his penetrating intelligence that wealth and its high and low levels caused more harm than anything else in society and man must always remember that the ubiquitous hand of wealth influenced every aspect of our life's struggle for existence. It can make and mar a man's life. Poverty is a wild fire that can destroy all values. So every body must leave no stone unturned to make money by the sweat of his brow.

The Muslim nobles, the Persian money lenders, and Pathan speculators shared the surplus produce of the peasants along with the Hindu Deshamukhs, Deshpandes and merchant speculators. The peasants paid fifty per cent of the produce as land revenue. The upper cast land lords not only occupied the best lands but also privileged land holdings and rent free Inams and watans which enabled them to live in comfort.

The poligars, chotanawafs and other powerful fellows became bandits to loot the villagers. Violently exploiting the peasants and encroaching the lands of the poor. <sup>1</sup> While condemning the systems which permitted the rich to exploit the poor and the community his personal philosophy was to exhort the rich to help the poor and attain salvation. His sympathies were always on the side of the poor. One should perform good deeds and he laid the greatest stress on helping the poor.

That unless a classless society was established through voluntary sharing of wealth. There would certainly be a violent revolution causing misery and destruction. He did his best to set things right by persuasion and his poetry became a most powerful means. He was a practical philosopher and a socialist who believed in an egalitarian society.

His statements were fearless and open. His ideas have to the thoughtful persons as the sun's rays to the lotus. He asked the rich to give relief to the starved whatever he might be. The starving must be fed. Whether they were good or bad, high caste or low caste, friends or foes even they chandalas (untouchables).

Vemana told about the dignity of labour. One must earn money with his own hard labour. He should not depend on others' money though it is his parents. The whole wealth in the universe belongs to God. Vemana is the first saint poet and philosopher who recognized the "Dignity of labour" in our Telugu field. Being a supporter of the poor to establish economical equality he asked the rich to give their daughters in marriage to the poor for such actions according to him would bring about more social justice and alleviation of poverty.

Vemana thought that such alliances between the rich and poor families would lead to better social justice and social harmony.

Vemana could see that it was impossible to persuade the rich people in society to be more charitable and helpful to the poor. He was disgusted with their greed and callous indifference to the sufferings of the poor neighbours. His solicitude for the welfare of the poor was so intense that he had no hesitation in asking his followers to rob the rich and help the poor by all means.

“By cheating or deceiving or through theft or by force any how you must secure wealth from the rich miser persons to help the wretched poor.”<sup>2</sup>

“Whether the wealth belongs to parents or relatives or others take the money from them compassionately to distribute it to the starving. It is a great virtue of humanity.”<sup>3</sup> One can give his own money to the needy. It is not a great thing. One who gives others wealth without fear he is called real human being.<sup>4</sup>

Vemana could understand the social reality and the origin of property and wealth more rationally than most of contemporary saints and poets of India. He could not only see the harmful effects of the great gulf between the rich and poor, and the consequent social disharmony, but also discern that neither land nor wealth was the eternal possession of their present owners.

Vemana says Man is temporary being on this earth. Everything is transient.

He says in his verse "When one says with pride that the land belongs to me the land laughs loudly. When a man says that this wealth belongs to me the wealth laughs."

A coward fears in battle field the death laughs.

Land belonged to the village community. But it had passed into the hands of the upper caste group in course of time. The elite class not only prevented the lower depressed classes from acquiring and occupying land, but also encroached up on common land and expropriated the poor by virtue of their political coercive power and armed strength. Vemana as a social thinker could proclaim that wealth was the product of labour. It is by stating such self evident scientific truth in his verses, that he has excelled most of the poets, saints and philosophers of his time not only in Andhra but also in India.

In his "A Study of the History and Culture of the Andhra" Kambhampati Satyanarayana observes rightly, in an age when the gulf between the exploiter and the exploited did not yet rouse the masses to action the idea of abolishing the system of exploitation was inconceivable. He was the first known poet of the Andhras who could see not only the gulf between the rich and the poor but also discerned the process of transformation of caste into class though his conception of class was not the modern scientific one which was not possible for his time. Vemana advised the people who were



suffering in the famine circumstances should leave native places to go other distant places for their lively hood. He compared it to the cranes that go away when the lake is dried up. <sup>5</sup> Vemana thought man must be free from debts. He knows the social economical structure. He himself experienced and saw the others suffering.

One who is in debts will suffer mentally. When the mind is depressive the body will suffer. When the mind and body not in peaceful condition he cannot do anything successfully. It is too bad to have a friendship with a wicked person. In the course of time he will spoil you. It is not proper to do unwholesome work. It is nasty. The fourth moral Vemana says in this verse is the worst this is to mortgaze to others. This verse is purely economical. Man must have self control <sup>6</sup> A selfish miser feels always as if the wealth always be with him that he will live for ever. When he leaves this world he does not take a single pie with him. Really he is ignorant. <sup>7</sup> A fool earns lot of money and keeps it in the earth secretly. He does not help anybody who approaches him. He does not enjoy it. His life is waste. His money also is useless.<sup>8</sup>

The man who earns wealth abundantly gets proudness and egotism. He thinks that the wealth is given by God to him as a remuneration for his good deeds in previous life. He also thinks that he is fortunate and feels superiority complex. He wants to enjoy the life luxuriously. He never thinks about his fellow beings

who are suffering from poverty and illness. He makes himself self-centred. With egocentric nature he falls in bad habits like debauchery, gambling and other evil practices. He spends his wealth in wrong ways. He loses his wisdom. At last his life will be ruined. Christ says " Pass it on Pass it on it is not for thyself only" "Love thy neighbors as thyself" (Bible)

The wise who does good deeds in this life will attain salvation. The fool who wastes his money in evil practices will decline.

Vemana emphasized it in his verse: The man who is wealthy does not give food to the hungry man at his door from a distant place. But he gives money harlots for temporary sexual enjoyment.

All social activities are linked with money. One who is good for nothing the society look down upon him. One who has self sufficiency will be respected. Society will give him financial help also. Through money man can attain contentment and happiness. He who lives with hard labour will get social sympathy. One who earns money in good ways his character and conduct will be praised. One who has good money dealings in the society and helping nature to the fellow beings in a humanitarian outlook he will be appreciated by all. Vemana Says in a natural way in this verse "In whatever method one must earn money for the livelihood of his family, whether it is by servitude or by hard labour he will be

respected by his wife. If he is unable to earn money looked down even by his wife also.

Money is the criterion for respect and dignity in this society. <sup>10</sup>

One who he loses all his money becomes pauper; his mother, wife, children and near and dear would not like him, on the other hand they will become enemies. Through this verse Vemana says poverty is a handicap and most harmful.<sup>11</sup>

- The rich man attracts all.
- Though he is short seems tall.
- Though he is black seems red like rose.
- Though he is ugly seems most handsome.
- Though his words nasty they sound melodiously.

He is rich. Richness is power. Money is double edged sword. The rich man can do whatever he wants. The rich man can get whatever he needs in this society. Vemana told boldly, "A rich man will be praised as more handsome than cupid. More stronger than Bheema. He shines like sun. When he looses his wealth and become pauper the same society looks down him as a mad fellow."<sup>12</sup> Whenever a man amasses wealth he naturally becomes proud. He develops evil ego. The common people are looked down by him.

He is no way useful to the society. Generally, the poor people are attracted by him thinking that he will be helpful to them.

Vemana criticizes such a reserved rich man. He cannot open the mouth before others because he is not all interested to help. Vemana cynically compares him with that of the typhoid patient who is inactive.<sup>13</sup> Some people give charities to show their greatness in the society. Some orthodox people give alms to remove their sins of past and present. Some others donate to exhibit their status. Some cheat the mob in the name of religion.

Vemana says that he who gives in a secret way without any secondary thought is the real donor. Such a man is blessed by God. The Bible says if you give the alms with the right hand that left hand should not notice it.<sup>14</sup> One who earns a lot of money without helping nature to the needy fellow being, keeps wealth in the earth without enjoying life is wasted. He destroys his own life also as a fool.<sup>15</sup> If there is a wicked person at a kind hearted man who desires to help the needy always comes on his way and stops. It is just like a thorny bush under the Kalpataru (A tree in paradise which gives all boons) i.e. the deserved cannot reach the Kalpataru due to the thorny bushes.<sup>16</sup> Birds and beasts never ask help mutually. When a man who is suffering from poverty asks financial help his close friend in the refused what can we say he is utterly useless and impotent. We can see the Vemana's righteous indignation in this verse.<sup>17</sup>

One who helps needy secretly he is genius person. He is a real donor. Some body exhibits their pompus in their alms giving. <sup>18</sup> Wealth is only the criterion but not the caste. He who achieves self sufficiency is superior to any caste. Wealth gives every thing. Even the superior caste man having no wealth is inferior to any caste we can see in this verse the Vemana's economical view about this society.<sup>19</sup> One should not borrow form the money lender. Borrowing is a nasty thing and it is dangerous also. When there is no other way one should borrow money from the lenders to come out of the difficulties. The money lender looks like a sun (Loka Bandhava) when he is giving money. Generally, the money lenders are all profit motivated. When the lender demands the money to repay he looks like Yama. If the borrower is unable to repay the money within the time he has to face insults and difficulties. Vemana does not like borrowing. <sup>20</sup> In Vemana's view wealth is unstable. Man's life is transient. Every body knows it. Yet he is in delusion.

When the man who got richer he becomes proud. He does not care any body. Wealth is like moon light. It increases and decreases. <sup>21</sup> Wealth gives all the pleasures in this life on this earth. If you get wisdom through the wealth in this life you will enjoy pleasures in the Heaven.<sup>22</sup>

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**Chapter : V**

**MORAL PHILOSOPHY OF SRI VEMANA**

India that is Bharat is not a mere geographical entity. India is an immortal Idea. India is a comprehensive, harmonizing state of mind in sun, unity of spirit.

Referring to India, the ancient Romans used to say:

- *Ex oriente lux;*
- *Ex occidenta lex;*
- *Out of the east, light*
- *Out of the west, laws*

From time immemorial, the wisest of men from all parts of the world have turned to India in quest of truth, in search of answers to such questions as to the nature of the man, the why, the what, whence and the where of problems psychological, epistemological, ontological, ethical and axiological, the enquiry into the nature of Being itself, the question of purpose and values of life. Above all the pathway to reality which is existence, consciousness and Bliss-sat-chit-Ananda.

The values of India's ageless culture traveled far and wide in the past, from Rome and Alexandria in the west to China and Japan in the east. India in turn gained in many ways from its far-flung contacts. Then followed a long night. India to day is striving again to revivify those spiritual and cultural exchanges- to give and take that which is best in every great culture to build up a common wealth of Faith, values and cultures.<sup>1</sup>

"Aa no Bhadra Kratavo yantu veratah"<sup>2</sup> This Vedic prayer means "Let noble thoughts be come to us from every side".

This prayer welled up from the innermost recesses of our seers more than 3000 years ago and runs like a golden thread through all our history to his day.

Swami Vivekananda has averred that “the whole world can be virified, made strong and energized through the Vedas. They will call the trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable and the down trodden of all creeds, all sets to stand on their feet and to be free.”

Of all things desired by man, peace of mind is the most important. Neither health nor wealth, neither fame nor status can be a substitute for this most valuable asset.

President Roosevelt promised his people the famous four freedoms during the second world war. These are freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want and freedom from fear. Americans have secured first three freedoms but the last one- freedom from fear is still a distant goal.<sup>3</sup>

Peace of mind broadly has two aspects the negative and the positive. On the negative side it involves the elimination of fear, worry, anger and such other emotions which sap vitality, and disturb inner harmony. On the positive side it means the deliberate and consistent practice of tranquility, serenity, patience and equanimity. It is, of course, not easy to eliminate the negative factors.

Religion has always played an important role in helping mankind to achieve mental peace. Religion has been a tremendous force for promoting peace and goodwill in the world. As Horace Bushnell has said, “the noblest charities, the best fruits of learning, the richest

discoveries, the best institutions of law and justice every greatest thing the world has seen represents more or less directly, the fruitfulness and creativeness of Religion.” To what extent religion will help man to find mental peace will, of course, depend on whether he adopts the right attitude do it. As Benjamin Desrach has observed, religion should be the rule of life, not a casual incident in it.”

“A mass movement is required to inculcate such virtues as self restraint, altruism, reverence for life, truth and justic, so that the gifts of science are used only for beneficial purposes. It is the special responsibility of Indian saints and sarvants; for in recent years there has been a sharp decline in moral values in our country and because India with her rich heritage of spiritual treasure is best filted to play the role of world Teacher.”<sup>4</sup>

There was an upsurge of new creeds like Bhakthi movement of the 15th to 17th centuries against the caste system. It was a protestant movement which had enlightened many talented artisans and intellectuals and peasants. Ramananda, Vallabhacharya, Chitanya, Nanak, Kabir das, Eknath, Tukaram, Tulasidas, Dadu, Lallu, Vemana were the prominent leaders of the Bhakthi movement. They belonged to different professions. Kabit was a wearer, Ravidas was a cobbler, sena a barber Rishi swapacha a tanner, Tukarama trader, Nandan and Nanak a Calico printer and trader, Dadu a cobbler. Thus there were a galaxy of religious leaders who enlightened and roused of the people to an awareness of social morality, human brother hood and devotion to God.

Like the protestant movement in Europe in the 16th century, there was a religious, social and literary revival and reformation in India but notably in the Deccan in the 15th and 16th centuries. This revival was not Brahmanical in its orthodoxy; It was heterodox in its spirit of protest against forms and ceremonies, and class distinction based on birth and ethical in its preference of pure heart and of the law of love, to all other required merits and good works. The religious revival was the work also of the people, of the masses and not of the classes. At its heads were saints and prophets, poets and philosophers, who chiefly came from the lower orders of society, tailors, carpenters, potters, gardeners, shop keepers, barbers and even Mahars (scavengers) more than from Brahmins" (Jadunath sarkar), "Sivaji and his times" (1919 Calcutta) p 13.14]

Vemana who imbibed the radical veera Saivite creed denounced those mendicants imposters and hypocrites. Disillusioned with similar sects masquerading as religious and spiritual orders he passed through a whole gamut of religious experiences participated in numerous debates with scholars and finally arrived at his own independent conclusions which were different from all other existing sects. His was an endless quest for truth. In his own life time his verses were translated into all the South Indian languages. His deep spiritual convictions, upright saintly life, and amazing poetical genius gathered around him sensitive intellectuals as well as common people, who preserved his verses and worshipped him after his death.

What is morality? Morality is righteousness, good behaviour, good qualities and good ideology combined with love, compassion, peace and honesty.

“Annie Besant said “That India as a nation is not dependent on an outer structure, economical or social; religious knowledge and awareness is the rock upon which India’s nationality is founded. This knowledge, since it concerns relationship and the ultimate destiny of all human beings, is linked with conduct knowledge in the true sense cannot be obtained without self purification. In every one of the great religions of world, this fact is stressed wisdom and right conduct are inseparable. Without ‘seela’ there can be neither prajna nor Samadhi”<sup>5</sup>

Religion must moralise the mankind. Without morality there is no religion. All religious essence is only one truth that is righteousness, beauty and goodness.

Sri Vemana hated the weaknesses of all religions. He observed what was happening before his eyes. His sharpened mind can distinguish between good and bad. He was all knower. Sri Vemana is independent saint poet. He is one man army. He decided to face the wretched society with his emotional powerful talent of poetry. He told his verses freely fearlessly and openly. He directly attacked upper classes exploitation, injustice, hypocrisy and violence.

There are sufism, Sikkism, Din-il-ilahi and other several cults belong to Bhakthi movement also preaching their ideologies to reform the society in north India. Kabirdas, Ravidas, Gurunanak, Tulasids and other great saints were in that movements. Their Hindi songs were spreading in northern part of India. In that period only the voice of Vemana raised and echoed in the South India. Sri Vemana’s chief aim is to serve the poor the depressed and suppressed. He used his verses as

arrows like Savyasaachi (Arjuna) who can discharge with both hands the arrows from his quiver on enemies. His more poems shines like gems with sense of humour, wit and wisdom. His sympathies were always on the side of the poor.

His imperishable verses filled with love, compassion, honesty, charity, peace and universal brotherhood. He secured his seat as a moral poet in the galaxy of world poets. His disciples and lovers worship his holy scriptures keeping in a sacred place.

Vemana is more popular as a moral poet, saint and philosopher. He preached in simple local language for the public. The preaching of morals will create in common man good behaviour and good character. In those days the rich, feudal and priests changed the morals in their own accord. Vemana says the universal truths never be changed. He gave top most priority to the moral in his poetry. The morals are outcome of his personal experiences. He was always in search of truth.

***“ The seer is better than listener***

***who experienced the truth really greater than above”***

***“ Vinnavaarikanna kannavadadhikundu***

***kanna varikanna kaliyu vaadu***

***Unnatonnatudayi urvilopal a Nandu”<sup>6</sup>***

The mean person always boosts about his greatness, status and power. A gentle man will talk always tenderly. Vemana compares the sound of the bronze to the gold which is more precious.<sup>7</sup> Vemana says in this verse the stupid cannot hear good advice. More over he turns against his well wishers and abuses. It is like the farmer put the grass



before the brutal bull it turns to fight the grass giver.

Vemana said it is their nature we cannot mend them easily.

***Tanadu Melugori dharmambu cheppina***

***Tittuchundu morakuletta yeduta***

***Gaddiveya potla Goddu Kommadinchu***

***Vishwadabhirama<sup>8</sup>***

“ By birth babul tree has thorns from the seed it comes out thus wicked has the possessed all the bad qualities in his mind. We cannot change at any cost.”

***Tummachettu mullu thodane puttunu***

***Vittulona nundi Vedalunatlu***

***Moorkhunakunu Buddhi munduga puttunu<sup>9</sup>***

Vemana comments the richness and relationships in the following manner. What is the use of great wealth of a rich person who does not help the needy. What is the use of relationship, which does not help in calamity what is the use of a doctor that does not diagnose the disease.

***“Badugu nerugalen prabhavambadiyela***

***prodi idami bandhu bhuthi yela***

***Vyadhi Teliyanatti Vaidyudu mariyela”***

***VishwadabhiramaVinuraVema<sup>10</sup>***

He condemned and abused the rich feudal and local rulers who are exploiting the poorer sections and the community with their power violently. They cannot escape from the clutches of the fate. He continued to give more moral poems as follows:

***Anni danamulaku Annadaname goppa***

***Kanna talli kante ghanulu leru***

***Enna Guruni kanna Ekkuva ledura***

***Vishwadabhirama Vinura Vema<sup>11</sup>***

Giving of food to the hungry is the greatest deed of all. No body is greater than mother. The Guru who gives knowledge is ever honorable. In the view of Vemana food is God. Without food man cannot live in this world. Charity is great virtue. It gives him peace and happiness.

Mother gives body, shows affection and love till the end of her life. The Guru giving the knowledge shows the way for our lively hood. He moulds our character to live peacefully. We are always grateful to them.

***Anyulakunu Vachchu Aapada Tanadiga***

***Nennu vadu Bhuvini nunna vadu***

***Enna dani toni ihaparambulu lessa***

***Vishwadabhirama Vinura Vema<sup>12</sup>***

Only that man is living man who feels the sufferings of his fellow men as his own. And when such a living man meditates upon the meaning of the life, and here after he becomes a supreme being. As a humanist Vemana emphasized the brother hood of mankind.

***Chaaki vaadu koka cheekaku padajesi***

***Maila deesi lessa madichinatlu***

***Buddhi cheppu Vaadu guddite nemaya?***

***Vishwadabhirama... Vinura Vema<sup>13</sup>***

The washer man beats the cloth and wrings it to make it clean.  
What does it matter if the teacher chastises us to remove our ignorance?  
We should welcome such chastisement as it is intended to benefit us.  
Vemana intended to wash the wickedness in the humanity.

***Suguna Vanturalu Sudatiai yundina  
Buddhi mantulayina putrulloppa  
Swargametikayya samsari kinkanu  
Vishwadabhiraama Vinura Vema<sup>14</sup>***

If wife is obedient and chasty woman, the sons are clever and  
disciplined what for the heaven to a house holder. Vemana says Sansara  
yoga is greater than all yogas.

***Aalimatalu Viri Annadammula rosi  
Verupadedu vaadu verrivaadu  
Kukka Toka patti godavarrduna  
Vishwadabhiraama Vinura Vema<sup>15</sup>***

One who believes the sweet words of his wife the backbiter  
and hates his brothers to separate from the joint family is a fool and  
henpecked. Vemana compares him one who wants to cross Godavary  
with the help of a dog's tail. Vemana likes Joint families. There is  
development and achievement in co-operative effort.

***Talli biddalakunu Tagavutu buttinehu  
Dhanamu sukhamu kurchadani vachintru  
Kani gadanaleka gadachuta Etlura  
Vishwadabhiraama Vinura Vema<sup>16</sup>***

Money creates enmity between mother and sons. Somebody  
says money cannot give happiness and peace. Vemana asks how to  
get food without earning money?

Some says, with folded hands

***(Matasuta virodhaya Hiranyaksh namo namah)***

***Salutations to thee oh. Wealth who creates***

***Enemity between mother and sons.)***

Vemana says if your mind is in your control, money cannot do any harm. Every body should work hard to earn money for his lively hood and to help others. It is human labour that can produce every thing.

Money is the source of courage without courage man cannot achieve anything.

*"Dhanamulamidam Jagath*

*Dhyryam sarvatra Sadhakam"*

*Kanulu poyina vaadu kallu poyina vaadu*

*Ubhayularaya Gudi yundinatlu*

*Peda pedagudi pena goni undunu*

*Viswadabhirama Vema<sup>17</sup>*

Naturally the poor mingles with poor. There is no scope to go nearer to others. The blind and the lame will be united because of their disabilities. Vemana appeals the poor to be united. Then only they will become strong.

***Puli adettidanna Bhuloka Mrigaraju***

***Kali adetti danna Kaanradu***

***Puliyu kaliyu kannu bhuvi naakaliye Hechehu***

***Vishwadabhirama Vinura Vema<sup>18</sup>***

The Tiger is the king of the forest. It is cruel. It rules the all beings in the forest. Kali is the name of present era. It means time. Time is invisible. It is endless and beginningless. On this earth aakali(hunger) greater than puli(Tiger) and kali(Time). Tiger is a cruel beast. All the animals in the forest are frightened by the tiger. It kills and eats the animals in the forest cruelly to satisfy its hunger. Kali is invisible. Vemana the prophet of humanity says the hunger is more terrible than any thing on the earth. Hunger is a fire. It destroys and kills the human beings.

Poverty is the root cause of hunger. We must satisfy hungry by giving of food. It is our duty to help the disabled poor. Helping nature leads a man to supreme goal. Vemana said many verses with painful and merciful voice about the hunger and poverty.

***Kaligina manujundu Kamundu somundu***

***Migula tejamunanu Melagu chundu***

***Vitta heenudayina rittayai povura***

***Vishwadabhirama Vinura Vema*<sup>19</sup>**

A rich man seems like Manmatha (The most handsome) and Soma ( the most beautiful) to the people. His status in the society is very high. Richness brings all pleasures and authorities and covers his inabilities and weaknesses.

The same man when loses his wealth becomes pauper and useless. So the money is only the criteria which show man's position in the society.

***Vittamu galavaani Veepuna pundayina  
Vasudha lona chala varthakekku  
Pedavani inta pendlyina nerugaru Vishwadabhirama  
Vinura Vema<sup>20</sup>***

If there is a small ulcer on the back side of a rich man the news is propagated all over the area with in short time. If a marriage takes place in a poor man's house cannot be recognized however auspicious it may be even by the neighbor also.

People gather around the rich man like frogs that appear in the tanks in the rainy season and like the flies moves around the Jaggery. If a rich man falls ill many of the people attend him to show their sympathy.

***No body will care a poor man's death.  
" Money makes many things" (proverb)  
Nerananna vaadu Nerajana mahilona  
Nerthunanna Vaadu Vaartha gadu  
Urakunnavaade uttamothamu dagu  
Vishwadabhirama Vinura Vema<sup>21</sup>***

There are three types of workers in the society. First type of people will escape without implementing legitimate work. He is cunning by nature. The second type of people always chattering and boastings. They act as capable but they are useless. The third type people who are energetic and efficient will keep quite and can achieve whatever it may be.

Vemana admires the third type of people who are always active.

***Annamadhikamaina Nadiyu ta champunu***

***Annamantakunna Aatma nochuhu***

***Champanompa Buvva chalada Veyyela***<sup>22</sup>

A glutton will die with more food. A poor man will die with hunger without no food. Food is the only cause for life and death. A man should know the discrimination of good and bad. Man must control his mind and go in a proper way.

***Marma merugaleka Matamulu kalpinchi***

***Urvi dukkulagudu rokari kokaru***

***Gajutinti kukka kalavala padu reethi***

***Vishwadabhirama Vinura Vema***<sup>23</sup>

All the religious tell the same truth. The followers with narrow mindedness create quarrels as if their religion is superior to the other. Vemana used the grandest simile. The dog in a room fitted with mirrors all round astonish and afraid seeing so many dogs in the mirrors barks and barks and struggle with them because of maya and hits its head and dies. The man in the delusion cannot understand reality of the universe. He himself became a victim in this circuit by him.

***Bratuku Teruvuleni Badugulandaru pedda***

***Yogi varula Manchu sagiraga***

***Bandavadu mundu Dandmbuliduduru***

***Vishwadabhirama....Vinura Vema***<sup>24</sup>

Those who do not work and became lazy in guise of Swamijeas, pathadhipathis, Mathadipathis and religious priests for their

lively hood deceiving the common people. The peasant masses became victims of not only secular authorities but also religious charlatans and hypocrites. Virasaivites, Vaishnavites and other sects degenerated to such an extent that, religion became the opium of people. Discovering observers like Vemana could see how the society reeled under the exploitation of parasitic poligars, Zamindars and renters. Vemana denounced the entire garment of traditional theology based on ancient scriptures and put forward an anti-feudal ideology and pleaded for economic amelioration of the poverty stricken people. In his quest for truth he discovered the inextricable link between wealth and caste poverty and economic exploitation, labour and life, theology and upper caste ideology Vemana was our foremost Anabaptist, the pioneer of social Protestantism and the morning star of our reformation.

***Ralla namniyunna Rajaadhirajulu***

***Kuti kedali Bhuvini Kuli chaniri***

***Rallu pagulagotti Rakshasa putrulu***

***Mallu nullu galigi maniri Vema.*<sup>25</sup>**

The kings and princes who trusted the stone gods have left their food, fallen and perished in the earth. The sons of demons who destroy these stones retain their villages and estates and live there (This is evidently aired at the Mohammadian government (estate is here Mahal, the Persian word)

***Kaniyuganaledu Kadalapadanoru***

***Viniyu Vinagaledu Vismayamuna***

***Sampada galavani sannipatatambidi***

***Vishwadabhirama Vinura Vema***<sup>26</sup>



A rich man does not care for the poor because he is proud of his wealth. Though he pretends to see you he does not notice. He would not open his mouth and talk to you. He dislikes to hear the words of the people. This is the economic melody of the rich people. He feels that the wealth is permanent. He is in the illusion that he and his wealth are permanent.

***Kaanivani toda kalisi melagu chunna***

***Kaanivani valene kaanturavani***

***Taadi krinda paalu Taagina chandara*<sup>27</sup>**

Naturally a man is suspicious. If his friend and well wisher moving with his enemy he suspects his friend as enemy. A friend of an enemy is also enemy to him. If one who is taking mild under the Valmira the people suspect him that he is drinking Tadi.

***Emi gonchu Vachehe Emida gomipovu***

***Puttu vela narudu Gittu Vela***

***Dhanamadechatu kegu Danegunehatiki***

***Vishwadabhirama Vinura Vema*<sup>28</sup>**

This is a philosophical verse of Vemana. Human life is temporary. Every thing on the earth is temporary. Everything passes away. Man does not know the mystery of his birth and death. He is in strong illusion. He brings nothing from the womb of his mother and takes nothing when he will leave this. All are actors. One may enter and plays his role and exits.

***Paraga tanadu Sommu***  
***Parula Sommunu guda***  
***Daana michchinapude Dhanyudaaye***  
***Inchukanta Bhayamu Enduku Talapoya***  
***Tudanu mokhanambu Doraku Vema.***<sup>29</sup>

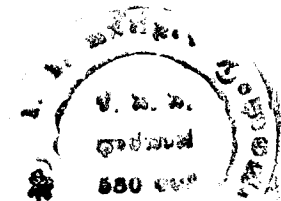
One who distributes his wealth and other's wealth to needy with good heart he need not fear about his future. Definitely he will attain Salvation. It is hidden secret that if a man gives with heart and soul without expecting any returns. He definitely receives great result.

***Matamu lenniyayina Satamuganundavu***  
***Satamu ganu nundu Jagati yokate***  
***Anta matamu vidichi Na Brahmanerugute***<sup>30</sup>

All religions are created by the narrow minded selfish fellows. For their pleasures and selfish ends these are founded by them. When wisdom has downed the religions wither away. Then only we can find out the real truth.

***Vemana opposed these religious systems and their rituals.***  
***Udumundumn Nurendlum***  
***Padiyundumu pamu yokka padimureudhan***  
***Maduguna kokkera yunduve***  
***Pudamini purushartha parudu punyudu Vema***<sup>31</sup>

A guana will live a century, a serpent will creep for ten countries, and the crane will live in a pond for thousand years. He who possesses man's wisdom is the only excellent one.



***Braduku nityamanuchu Vaduruchu Vagameera***

***Virra veeguvaaru verrivaru***

***Pranullella yamuni Bari gorrelu suma***<sup>32</sup>

Those who boast always about his greatness beat his own trumpet  
are fools. They do not know that the life is a bubble in the water. All  
the sheep must go to the slang tow house.

***Kukka yemerungu Guru linga devuni***

***Nakka yemerungu Nokka proddu***

***Moorkhudemerungu Mokshampu Drovanu***

***Vishwadabhirama Vinura Vema***<sup>33</sup>

What does the dog know of the linga priests God? What does the  
fox know one meal a day fasting? What does the obstinate fool know of  
he path of beatitude?

***Kanaka parvatamuna kapura nunnatti***

***Animishesukayina Aasa bodu***

***Kavacha kundalamulu Karnuni Adugadr***

***Vishwadabhirama Vinura Vema***<sup>34</sup>

Though his dwelling be on Meru the golden hill cupidity will not  
leave the God Indra himself. Did not he ask Karna for his armour and  
large earrings?

***Akulannya Fese Ekelandaga Jese***

***Kokalanda Jese Eekalandagajese***

***Manarakshanambu Maryada Janulaku***

***Vishwadabhirama Vinura Vema***<sup>35</sup>

'God provided leaves to the trees feathers to the birds, tails to the animals and cloths to the human beings to protect their secret parts.' In the eyes of creator all creatures are equal. Especially he provided knowledge to human beings. So man is called supreme being.

***"Thalli yunna yapudi thanadu garabambu***

***Ame pova thananu araya revaru***

***Manchi kalamapude maryada narjinchu***<sup>36</sup>

In the lifetime nobody loves you like mother; she is a father, guru, God and well wisher. She sacrifices every thing for her children. She must be satisfied with your good deeds. After her death nobody will take care of you. Mother's love is boundless and fathomless.

***"Mrigamadambu chuda meeda nallaganundu***

***paridha villu dani parima lambu,***

***guruvulaina varigunamu lelaguna***<sup>37</sup>

By appearance the mask of the deer is black in colour. But its sweet fragrance spreads to the surroundings and live long. A righteous guru looks like an ordinary man, but he gives imperishable knowledge to the disciple.

***"Pappu leni kudu parula kasahyambu***

***Appulenivade adhikabaludu***

***Muppuleni vade modalu sujnanundu***<sup>38</sup>

With out the dhal curry the food is not be tasteful to any body. If a person is indebted to any body would become coward and weak. A man who is free from debts is called a gentle man. A sage who renounced all worldly pleasures had no danger form any body.

***“Heenudenni vidya ila Nabhyasinchina***

***Ghanudegadu heena Janudegani***

***Parimalamula gardhabhamu moya ghanamouna***<sup>39</sup>

A person who is very learned, highly intelligent, if he is wicked he is considered to be a stupid and is hated by the society because of his menial behaviour can we consider a donkey a great? Though it carries sandal woods

***“Chittasudhi kaligichesina punyambu***

***konchamaina nadiyu koduvagadu***

***vittanambu marri Vrukshambunakunentha***<sup>40</sup>

A man who does good deeds with pure heart however they may be small carry a great result. Just like a small seed of a banyan tree become great tree

***“Geetha says”***

***“Swalpa mapyasya dharmasya***

***trayate mahato Bhayath”***

***A small good deed release you from a great fear.***

***“Gunayuthunaku melu gorantha jesina***

***konda yagunu vani gunamu chetha***

***konda koddimelu gunahennuderuguna?***<sup>41</sup>

If we give a small help to a righteous man it will become a big hill in future. If we give a great help to a wicked person. The result would be nothing before helping one should observe the quality of the receiver.

***“Alpabuddhi vanikaddhi karamitchina***

***Dodda varinella tholaga gottu***

***Cheppudinedikukka cheraku theeperuguna?”<sup>42</sup>***

A menial person if had a chance to occupy the seat of authority will definitely drive away the genuine people. A dog that bites cold meat tastes no canesweet? A bad person likes the bad people naturally, and hates good people naturally the dog does not like the sweetness of the sugar cane.

***“Neellalona mosali Nigidi yenugu battu***

***Bayata kukkacheta bhangapadunu***

***Sthana balimikani thana balimikadaya”<sup>43</sup>***

A crocodile can catch the elephant in its pen. Yet, it will fall a prey to a dog out sides its ken. Its strength is in the place, but not one's own. Naturally each and every person has his own limits if he crosses the limit he will be useless.

***“Nikkamaina manchi neela mokatichalu***

***Thaluku beluku rallu thattedela,***

***Chaduva padgamaraya chaladayokkati”<sup>44</sup>***

It is enough that a single real sapphire stone which is precious. Why all these useless glittering stones. A single poem is enough which is worthy. Astrologically a sapphire stone is useful to remove the evils in the life. A single good verse lightens the mind.

***“Paduguradu mata patiyai dharajellu***

***vakkadadu mata Ekkadendu***

***Voorakunduvani voorellanoppadu”<sup>45</sup>***

Whether good or bad, majority opinion is acceptable. Single man's word is not taken into account. Vain talk will never be heeded.

***"Kulamuchethabatti gumpinchanetike***

***paduvunnachota prabhalu vittu***

***yetikulambika Ekkadi dwijudaya***<sup>246</sup>

Why do you distinguish the people on caste. The seeds will germinate in a fertile soil only. No body bothers for the caste system now and won't care for the Brahmin.

The society was divided into chaturvarnas (1) Bhrahmin (2) Kshatriya (3) Vysya and (4) Shudra. One caste is superior to another caste. The Brahmins are placed on the top of the social ladder and enjoyed privileges in the society. Now there is no such situation in the society.

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## **Chapter: VI**

### **THE RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF SRI VEMANA**

C.P. Brown introduced Vemana as a Siva devotee in the beginning of his "Verses of Vemana".

**Siva Kavulaku Nava Kavulaku**  
**Siva Bhakthiki Tattwamuna ku chintamanikin**  
**Sivaloka pramadhulakunu**  
**Sivunaku Guruvunaku Saranu Seyara Vema**  
**To the saint poets of Siva**  
**To the old and new poets of Siva creed**  
**To his essence and to the boon giving**  
**Gem chintamani, To those who**  
**Attend in the heaven of Siva to the**  
**God himself and to thy teacher**  
**Pray for aid of Vema.**  
**Bhava durudu Sarabhankudu**  
**Siva seeludu Veyugotu Siddheswarudun**  
**Siva Bhrityudu Vatamuludu**  
**Sivamaya chinmayudu somasekhara gurudun**

The unborn, the slayer of Sarabha endowed with the qualities of Siva and the Lord of a thousand millions of demi gods; the servants of siva who sitteth at the root of the sacred Banyan, He that is endowed with the mind of Siva the sage Soma Sekhara is my teacher. He prayed Siva who permeated all the universe.

Vemana appealed to the people about his verses. Vemana in the beginning was a staunch Veera Saivite. He told, Linga creed was greater than all creeds in the earth. He adored Siva, the Lord of Lords. He liked Siva in the "Trinity" (Brahma Vishnu Maheshwara). He praised Basava Puranam written by Palkuriki Somanah a great Saivite saint poet. It contains the stories of the devotees of Siva. Vemana said

***"Papa harana mounu Basavapuranaambu"***

Those who read Basavapurana will attain liberation

The hero of the Basavapurana was Basaveshwara. He was a great soul and an ardent devotee of Siva, who founded the Veerasaiva religion in 12<sup>th</sup> century. He ruled Karnataka Kalyani as his capital. He disliked Buddhism and Jainism.

Veerasaivism was a revolutionary ideology of the middle ages which not only protested against the age old Brahmanical Varnasrama Dharma, it denounced every aspect of the Vedic religion and carried on a relentless fight against Sanatana Dharma. Basaveshwara wrote many verses and Vachanas in Kannada. They were popular in Kannada literature. Though he belongs to a high status(Kingship) he wrote: "My father was a low caste born Chennaiah, my grand father was Kakkaiah who was a cobbler. My Guru was Chikkaiah. Don't you know Kudali Sangama Deva?"

***“Kulaheenudu chennaiiah na Tandri***

***Madiga Kakkaiah Ma Jejinayana***

***Chikkaiah Na Guru***

***Adineku Teliyada Kudali sangama deva***

***(Basavana Vachanam)***

He strived for the uplift of lower castes and classes. He told in Kannada for the first time “ Kaayikame Kailasam” means “ Work is worship”. He condemned the exploitation of the rich and feudals. He served and sacrificed his entire life to the poor. Sarvajna a great devotee and poet of Karnataka was counter paracy of Vemana. Vemana followed Basaveswara in all angles.

In his view Siva is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and Almighty. Vemana mentioned many times about panchakshari mantra in his verses which belongs to Siva. “Sarabha rupamondi chamarevu Narasimhu Sivumi kante vere jeji yedi”

**Meaning:**

Siva assumed the shape of the Sharabha and slew Narasimha. Which God greater than Siva? “Sivudu Muladumpa Srishiyandarayanga”. Meaning : “ Siva is the radical root in the world”

***“Sivuni meedamanasu sthiramganunchina Nounu Mokshamaraya”***

If you concentrate constantly on Siva you will get salvation. Each and every mystic poem concerned to Siva the supreme power. Brahma, Eswara, Hara, Pranava, Parama etc are all synonymous to the word Siva.

Palkuriki Somana was one of the famous ancient Telugu poets opposed to write in traditional way of Sanskrit, which was paved by Nannaya and others. Before Somana there was no single poetical work in Telugu on contemporary social events. All were translations from Sanskrit. Palkuriki Somanath was a rebel poet not only in literature but against social evils also: He declared to write a great literary work in his original Tenugu (Janu Tenugu) neglecting the grammatical rules prescribed by Nannaya, the “ Aadikavi” and “Vaaganusasana” to shape the work more beautiful. He said, “my “Jaanu Tenugu” is sweet, simple and beautiful. Hereafter I will write my all-poetical works in my mother tongue.”

Somana wrote “Basava Puranam which was in ‘Janu Tengu’ in Dwipada (two lined verse) with the inspiration of Veera Saivism. It was a masterpiece appreciated by all poets, and was translated into Kannada. He used “prasayathi (Second syllable must be same letter) He showed novelty in language, tecknic metre and style in the Basava Puranam. Basava Puranam is not a mythology. It is a social poetical work containing contemporary stories of devotees of Siva. They were all the life histories of common people, from all castes. Bejjavva, Duggavva Kinnera Brahmaiah, Kummari



Gundaiah and other honest devotees who were glittering stars in the sky of Veerasaivam.

Palkuriki Somana was a disciplined responsible poet in Telugu. As a social reformer he raised his voice against “ Vedic Varna Vyavastha” and its casteism. Somana condemned untouchability which is shameful to mankind. The strengthened Vedic system is poisonous to the society. He scoffed superstitions, blind beliefs, injustice, exploitation and poverty. He wrote Panditharadhya Charitra and “Vrishadhipa Satakam in Telugu.” All stories are the flowers with divine fragrance and Basaveswara the great devotee of Siva an ardent social reformer who sacrificed his whole life to remove the social evils were the internal thread of the garland of Basavapurana. Somana the great divine poet offered it to Siva the power of universe. Somana was contemporary of II Pratapa Rudra who ruled Orugallu (warangal) from 1295 to 1323 AD. Gona Buddha Reddy wrote Ranganatha Ramayana in “ Duipada” style was the follower of palkuriki Somana.

“The demons were killed in Ramayana

***The relatives were killed in Bharatha***

***The Basavapurana removes all the sins”<sup>1</sup>***

Vemana's favourite book was Basavapuranam. Vemana admired this Purana and gave top priority in Telugu literature. Basaveswara's life history was described in Basava Puranam.

Basaveswara established Veera Saiva religion to root out the evils from society. Veerasaivism had a great social background of those days. Veera saivism was an extraordinary revolutionary religion. It was not mere a religious movement. It had political, economical cultural background. It was the depressed and oppressed people's revolution against the rich and feudal systems, also low castes and scribes attack on Brhamins which introduced the cruel "Varna Vyavastha" cast system to the mankind in this country. Vemana praised in his verse,

***" The religion of Veerasaivism was greater than all religions".***

Basaveswara wrote his experiences, universal truths, morals and principles in the form of Verses and verse libre (Vachanams)

***"Chennaiah is my father who born in lower caste***

***My grand father was Kakkaiah (The Madiga) a cobbler***

***Chikkaiah was my Guru***

***Didn't you know kudali Sangma Deva***

***(Basavachanam)***

The greatness of society does not depend on the rich upper caste persons or feudal class persons. It depends on multitudes of lower castes who are residing in slum areas. "We cannot get milk of cow sitting on the back of the cow. We must sit below the cow to draw the milk." This is the social philosophy of the Veerasaivism. Poverty is not a sin or curse of God. Social, economical systems are the causes for all these social evils and miseries. Vedic

Brahmanism is one of the main causes for these all crimes. Basaveswara the serious social reformer emphasized “ Work is worship.”<sup>1</sup> Deceiving others or in any wrong way who earns money are thieves in disguise and parasites. Basaveswara was also a political thinker and a mystic saint. Like Basaveswara Vemana believed in human endeavor. Hard work is the only to get of the poverty. He understood that the source of all things is effort.

“All wealth is a product of labour.” Vemana also said, all the articles essential for man’s existence were their source in the earth. All philosophies arise out of the human mind. It is human labour that produces every thing. In an another Verse. The land is mother the seed is father. The crops are offspring abundance of dairy produce by the cattle work with righteousness is Dharma of a man. After killing the Bijjala king the follower of Jainism, Basaveswara established Veerasaiva kingdom. He ruled Kalyani as his capital city. One of his main principles was to honour the womanhood. Before Basaveswara the woman community was in worst condition. They were treated as slaves. Basaveswara strived for their safety and hated the male superiority in all ways. There were many events in Basavapurana. The poor and low class people were exploiting by the rich and feudal. Basaveswara observed this and violently collected wealth from the rich and the feudal and distributed it to needy.

Like Basaveswara Vemana also had compassion about poor people mainly starving. Vemana said many verses on the difficulties and miseries of the poor with pain and mercy. In his view all occupations are equal. All human beings are equal before God. Vemana denied it and told who work hard for their livelihood and help others he can attain liberation. Mahatma Gandhi also said that an idle man is not worthy to take food. There was a moral in Sanskrit “ One who earns wealth with self labour is the best. Who enjoys with parental money that is middling neither good nor bad. One who enjoys on others money he is worst. And who enjoys women’s money he is too worst.

#### **THE WAYS OF LOKAYATIKAS**

The followers of Lokayatika religion hated Vedas, Upanishaths and all the systems of orthodox. It was called primeval materialistic religion in India. Vemana disliked this religion though he was a materialist. Lokayathikas were Shakthi worshippers, and Tantriks. They believed in the supremacy of Prakriti (Nature). They followed Adima Sankhya. - Sankhya means knowledge. They had discussions arguments always with Advaitas. The essence of the Vedas Vemana received through their discussions arguments and criticisms. That is why Vemana said in his verses “ Vemana knows the essence of Vedas and Puranas”.<sup>2</sup>As a matter of fact there was materialism only in the Vedas.

Vemana exposed his feelings regarding downtrodden starving suffering people in the society. Lokayathikas were called as Charvakas i.e. talkative. They were hated by the Vedic Brahmins from the beginning. Vemana also discarded their policy “ Rinam Kritwa Ghritam peetwa.” To fill their bellies was their aim. The body was their everything. They live to enjoy the life without any restrictions. There was a proverb in Telugu “ Appu chesi papu kudu” Vemana Says

***“A man who had no debts was the richest person.  
To be in debt is not worthful even to Hari or Hara”***

Buddha says who have no desires they will be great. Those who have suffering with desires they are poor even though they are the richest. The man who fills his belly with deceiving other and enjoys life is wretched. One who is in debts is not good in any way. Vemana said about these Shakthi worshippers and hated them. Likewise the Shakthi creed man consider power to be the divinity and, void of all senses (fitness) they fully perform the rites of Periar generations.<sup>3</sup>

Arudra in his essay “ Jaina influence on Vemana” says the Digambara Jainism may be the cause of Vemana’s nudity. It is wrong the Vemana hated Jainism. There was a Charvaka prophet who was the first propagator of Lokayalica religion, he was Asita kesa kambala. He was called an angry materialist. He was in meditation standing in mid -noon sun and also in heavy rain. Now

and then he was seemed in complete nakedness. There was a story in the Mahabharatha about a Charvaka. After Kurukshethra was over Dharma Raja victoriously enters into the Hasthina with a great following. There were Vedic Brahmins around Dharmaraja. The charvaka observed this scene seriously neared Dharma Raja and blamed him with harsh words “ Your name is Dharmaraja but your doings are all immoral. You are unfit to sit on the lion-seat of Hasthina. Charavaka was beaten by the angry Brahmins was dead. Vemana also blamed Dharmaraja in a verse. “ He has thrown away his clan into the water and slain his grand father (Bheeshma pitamaha in Bharahtha) and nobly lied a lie as big as elephant to cheat his guru Dronacharya as “ Aswathama hatah kunjara”. Aswathama Dronacharya’s son when heard this lie Dronacharya renounced his weapons while the war was going in Kurukshetra. Yet his name was a just king he was a great neem seed bitter and worthless.

Nobody knows Vemana’s religion. He was an independent poet who secured good virtues formal philosophies of all religions. He was always in calmness. He disliked pompous attributes. He was like honey bee who stored honey from various flowers in various seasons. Each and every verse of Vemana is a beehive.

**Vemana was a fire brand poet:**

To harm others in mind scheme men knowing not their own faults on earth them to harm Isn't God there who can?<sup>4</sup> What he saw in this society, what he experienced in this life what he thought in his mind, Vemana exposed openly. He was free, fearless and frank. He did not care anybody if he was wicked. Vemana philosophy was a colourful rainbow formed with the good virtues of all religions.

**Karma Vada**

According to the available evidences we can easily comprehend that Vemana does not belong to any philosophy or religion. We cannot see his full personality through any types of glasses. All scholars and pandits explained his partial shape only. The religious sentiments which he discarded, and the principles and ideals which he condemned all came out from the depth of his heart. We can observe his inner burning sincerity in all verses. Truth is his weapon. He never referred Dharmasastras or previous moral books. Whatever he saw, whatever he experienced in life told openly in poetic way. Through his vast experiences and keen observances of society he believed strongly in Karma theory. He was a believer in one God the Supreme Power. Veera Saivism never believes 'punarjanma' Transmigration. But Vemana exempted the rule carelessly and supported the Karma theory heartfully.

Macdonald also said "Vemana proposed strongly the karmic theory and there are so many verses to prove it. For example "One who did not do good deeds in past life is a sinner it is useless to desire good profits in this life. Just like who did not sow seeds in fertile land to expect for harvest."<sup>25</sup> "The Buddha realized that our suffering is not merely a product of change. There are causes behind it as there are causes for all phenomena. The law of cause and effect – karma is universal and fundamental to existence. Nor are the causes beyond our control. The word Karma is popularly understood as meaning "fate" Fate is something outside our control the decree of providence what has been preordained for each one of us. Karma however literally means "action." Our own actions are the causes of whatever we experience. All beings own their deeds, inherit their deeds, originate from their deeds are tied to their deeds. Their deeds are their refuge. As their deeds are base or noble so will be their lives.<sup>2</sup>

Every thing that we encounter in life is the result of our own actions. Consequently we can each become master of our fate by becoming master of our own actions. Each of us is responsible for the actions that give rise to our sufferings. Each of us has the means to end the suffering, in our actions. The Buddha said,

***You are your own master***

***You make your own future<sup>3</sup>***



Dr. Gandham Appa Rao condemned in his thesis the fatalists and believers in Almighty. He called them as pseudo-philosophers. He said again “ Vemana was a bitter enemy of this kind of fatalists. He was a great optimist and believed in man’s labour and creative effort”. No doubt Vemana was a staunch materialist and rationalist but at the same time he was a theist and spiritualist, who believed in supreme power, the Almighty. There was a popular adage in Sanskrit “Buddhih Karmanusarinee” that means Mind always follows Karma what he has done previously. “Fate is inevitable, powerful and man must experience it.”

According to Satyanarayana Goyenka a popular Buddhist preacher of Burma says “ Through their own investigations modern scientists have recognized and accepted the ultimate reality of material universe. However these scientists have not become liberated, enlightened persons. Out of curiosity they have investigated the nature of the universe using their intellects and relying on instruments to verify their theories. In contrast the Buddha was motivated not simply by curiosity but rather by the wish to find a way out of suffering. He used no instrument in his investigation other than his mind. The truth that he discovered was the result not of intellectualizing but of his own direct experience, and that is why his own direct experience, at that is why it could liberate him.....” Along with the physical process there is the psychic process, the mind. Although it cannot be

touched or seen, it seems even more intimately connected with ourselves than our bodies. We may picture a future existence without the body but we cannot imagine any such existence without the mind. Yet how little we know about the mind and how little we are able to control it. How often it refuses to do what we want, and does what we do not want our control of the conscious mind is tenuous enough, but the unconscious seems totally beyond our power or understanding, filled with forces to which we may not approve to be aware”<sup>4</sup>

Like Buddha, Vemana was also a truth seeker. In the later stage he was not an ordinary man. He was self realized and enlightened. He was known that the powerful influence of the universal power works on this material life. Though materially, physically man has full freedom, man must honour material life to do good deeds. Man should utilise it for self and for society. Then only he got mental peace and happiness no doubt it is human labour that produces every thing in physical life. The harmonious life leads to the supreme goal. Vemana with his extraordinary intelligence accepted the Karma theory which was hated by the Veersaivism. Through this Vemana says “ Do good and help others. Love humanism Live for humanity. No body should not suffer for food, raiment and shelter. Those who exploit and cheats others selfishly they spoil their families neighbors and society.”

**Some more Vemana verses on Karmavada:**

“Both the evil and the good done by us in a former life regularly become our portion in this life. How should either good or evil that we have not done in the first birth betide us?<sup>5</sup>

Where there is capacity there will be divine grace where there is no ability there will be no good result where there is fortune the God give wealth.<sup>6</sup>

The worthless and cunning cannot get God’s love. One who gives with pure heart even a small quantity of food to a starving poor in the name of God he will attain heaven. Man should know the secret of karma.<sup>7</sup> Those who have Jealousy about others fortunes, they are wretches hated by the Praramaguru (Siva) The All knower does he not know his past?<sup>8</sup> The new and old morals, the preaching of masters and chanting of Vedas are all unable to remove the results of Karma.<sup>9</sup>

Vemana stressed on Karmic theory:

***“The writing written by the lard perishes not  
through you blot it out (spoil it)***

What is written by the fate cannot be done away even with water. The writing in the forehead will not be gone through rub it with sorrow.<sup>10</sup>

Why do you muse on your acts done in a former life? They have become the life of the present existence. If thou consider the

acts, the present life shall take effect here after what understands is that which cannot know this.<sup>11</sup>

Vemana emphasized to do good deeds in this life. They will give good results in future. Vemana did not discourage the people. He exposed the social evils and he wanted to remove them. Through Karmavada he wanted to enlighten humankind to exercise their freedom in all walks of life transcending race, nation, caste class and sex or nay other denomination.

#### **Seven Maxmims:**

Arudra a popular modern Telugu poet who dipped in the ocean of Vemana literature released a book named Vemana Vedam.. It was published by Yuva Bharathis 5, Kings way Secunderabad, in 1974 for the first time. Arudra selected 40 verses (mandalam) from Vemana alongwith some supplementary verses were also taken for his commentary. In his own way he commented with unusual intelligence. In that commentary he revealed a doubtful new truth that Vemana in his later stage established a new religion and preached 7 principles (commandments) to his disciples and followers. Arudra said in the book this matter was taken from “ Vemana” a remarkable book written by Rallapalli Ananta Krishna Sarma Who reproduced it in his book from the unpublished manuscript of Komaraju Lakshmana Rao.

(‘Vemana’ by Rallapalli p. 113)

Whether the readers, scholars and followers of Vemana may believe the new truth or not, God knows. Perhaps Arudra might have not known about this. Sri Komaraju Lakshmana Rao panthulu might have taken the 7 maxims which was mentioned by Arudra from an essay written by J.D.B. Gribble. J.D.B. Gribble published a different essay on Vemana. In that article” he pretended to have received above cited seven maxims direct from the supreme being which formed the basis of his teaching”. These maxims would seem to aim at a higher Doctrine of morality than is usually inculcated in this country. Above maxims like “ Ten commandments in the Bible”. (Appendix 1, page 71 “Vemana through western eyes”). V.R. Narla admired Vemana as a humanist and nature's philosopher in his book 'Vemana'. Dr. Eswar topa in his book “Saint Vemana” and his philosophy described Vemana as a reformer who strived for humanization and culturization. Sri. M. Pattabhi Ram Reddy published a remarkable essay “ Vemana the humanist” in state archives magazine. In those days corruption, wickedness, bribery, social exploitation, illegal sexual contacts, unbearable poverty of the downtrodden people and other evils were permeated in all fields of the country. On seeing this decadence of whole society Vemana's heart moved. He suffered too much. At last he decided to face these evils with his extraordinary poetic faculty. He created his poetry as a double edged sharpened sword. He moved forward without caring any hindrances and obstacles. The Seven principles or maxims said by the above writers Arudra, Komarraju, Rallapalli and J.D.B. Gribble are given below :

***Do not steal.***  
***Be always merciful.***  
***Don't hurt the feelings of others.***  
***Be content with what you have.***  
***Be non jealous of another.***  
***Forsake anger and be patient.***  
***Be constant in divine services.***

These are the seven maxims said by J.D.B. Gribble and others. No doubt all are great principles. Vemana was not an ordinary man. He was a sage. His ideology and philosophy were unfathomable. The follower of Vemana knows he was beyond all philosophers of religions. How can Vemana establish a new narrow religion?

**1st Principle : Do not Steal:**

Saying the first principle on theft (do not steal) Arudra quoted and commented the verse of Vemana.

“God who cradled on the sea of mild craved He why for Vendor's milk so's the wealth of others sweet for all.” <sup>12</sup>

It is a satirical verse ridiculed. Krishna the God head who was called (Venna donga) butter stealer Vemana emphasized one who steals others property or deceives his fellow being he cannot escape from his sin. Certainly he will be punished.

***“He who commits all crimes in his heart of heart  
May make a false show of being good in all sorts  
Could he ever hide his sins from the Lord of Lords  
Listen to Vema spokes man of ‘Vox populi’ <sup>13</sup>***

Vemana rebuked the thieves robbers and bandits who rob and loot the poor innocent villagers property. They cannot escape from punishment. The cowards who are acting as rulers who go away for their self protection are also sinners. The Yama (Death) would not leave them.

“Seeing the foe and his force if the fellow takes to his heels as a coward must shallow when can stop a death in anger will follow? Listen to vema spokesman of ‘Vox populu.’<sup>14</sup>

A thief has close contact with a prostitute because both are going in wrong ways. The prostitute cannot stay in her house because of suspicion. The thief cannot go out in night because of moon light.<sup>15</sup>

Theft is a crime. It is harmful to others. One who exploits others is illegal. Morally it is a sin. It may react at any time. Theft is a shameful thing.

Esopanishath says :

***“Esavasya midam sarvam  
yatkinch Jagatyam Jagath  
Ten a tyakthena Bhunjeetha  
Ma gridhah kasyasweth Dhanam”<sup>16</sup>***

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Principle: Be always merciful:**

Every man must have humanitarian outlook with love and compassion. Vemana went further and said giving up violence was not enough. Man must learn to love even their bitterest enemy.

One of his verses Vemana says for deserving death in your hand, if caught; do him no harm as fit do good and set him free oh Abhirama listen to vema. <sup>17</sup>

Man should reform wicked and cruel persons with love and mercy. If one living being kills another, It is like killing God ponder over this and you will realize that Jeeva and Siva are one. The human beings kill other living beings and fathers himself on their flesh. How can merciless murderers attain salvation?<sup>18</sup>

“If we eat not food the fire in the belly devours the impurities of the belly. Thus if he abstain from food he who fasteth devoureth impurity.<sup>19</sup>

Give the life sustaining things when there is life in the body. No charity can help. The body if the life ceased of what avail can the good things of life(Jeeva Vastu Vulu) be after death? This is the direct question that Vemana put to the indifferent rich of his time. Even today this is the most pressing of man's problems all over the world.<sup>20</sup>



### **3<sup>rd</sup> Principle: Don't hurt the feelings of others**

One who knows himself he is a Jnani. Then he will be real perfect human being. If you want to understand others you must have good knowledge, good heart good behaviour along with love and mercy towards others. Then you can achieve everything whatever you need. The plant which is growing well becomes a tree and will give fruits certainly. <sup>21</sup>

Don't use harsh words. They will hurt and harm others. Then you will be a sinner, because they are also gods. The sin always hurts you. If you have no repentance you will be punished. With free and fearless mind knowing the morals as a humanist teach courage, faith and hope in the future to the discouraged and depressed. This is a great social service.<sup>22</sup>

Vemana as a humanist preaches to have Trikarana Suddhi  
(Good thoughts, good words and good deed)

**“Manasyekam Vachasyekam  
Karmanyekam Mahatmanah”**

(An old Sanskrit proverb)

### **4<sup>th</sup> Principle: Be content with what you have:**

Man who leaves his native place and roaming in various distant places in search of extra food is useless. He returns with empty hands. If he stays somewhere constantly and concentrate with inner view into his own body he will get peace and happiness.<sup>23</sup>

**Craving is the cause of all miseries.**

Vemana says, one who hates with strong aversion the secret deed of knowledge (witch craft, Black magic, occult powers etc) more wealth with cattle, the lips of beautiful women and powerful status in society will be liberated. Those who have crazy in pompous life will fall because they are all temporary. Be content with what you have. There is no greater salvation than contentment. Those who are fond of pleasures cannot gain any thing. In Vemana's language contentment means peace and happiness (2)<sup>7</sup>. The unrighteous man is swayed by his feelings; likes and dislikes. Prejudices and partialities blend him. Deserving and suffering craving and sorrowing, self control, he knows not and great is his unrest. The righteous man is master of his moods; likes and dislikes he has abandoned as childish things. Prejudice and partiality he has put away. Desiring nothing he does not suffer, not craving enjoyment, sorrow does not overtake him. Perfect in self control great peace abides with him.

Do not condemn resent or retaliate. Do not argue or become a one sided maintain their calmness with all sides be just and speak the truth. Act in gentleness, compassion and charity. Be infinitely patient. Hold fast to love and let it shape the doing. Have good will to all without distinction. Think equal of all and be distributed by none.<sup>24</sup>

### **5<sup>th</sup> Principle: Be non-jealous of another:**

The phrase of Jealous described as rivalry in matters of interest or affection.

One's individual happiness depends to a large extent upon his protecting himself and others from the hurtful results of gossip and Jealousy. See no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil, feel no evil. Most people can talk about other persons for hours intoxicated with the wine of Gossip. They never think of its poisonous effect.

"It is not remarkable, how some people can smoothly Jealously for hours at a time make the most caustic criticisms about the faults of others but can not themselves endure for a moment any reference to their own faults."<sup>25</sup>

Vemana says don't be Jealousy towards neighbors who are rich and pompous. It was their good deed in their previous birth. We must be in righteous way to keep our Dharma. In the name of dharma had many quarrels and wars took place. Lakhs of people became victims. For example on seeing "Mayasabha" Duryodhana became Jealousy of Pandavas. So the kurukshetra took place. Millions of people including their close relatives, friends along with Gurus, fathers, grand fathers, uncles' sons and grandsons died. It was only due to the Jealousy, hatred and power. But it was called righteous war (Dharma yuddha)Dharma has lost its real meaning in this matter.

Vemana worried about multitudes who are living like beast without knowing of the meaning of living.

One who is in search of temporary pleasures let them enjoy. Later he will suffer a lot. He does not know the real happiness in the life which gives everlasting peace.

Did not Indra, through cupidity became degraded? Was not cupid through desire turned into ash? When Brahma contracted desire did not he lose principle head? <sup>26</sup>

Milton wrote mind is in itself it makes hell of heaven and a heaven of hell

It is pointed out in the Geetha "That it is the mind which is responsible for the bondage and liberation."

One looks around and imagines that others are happier than himself. Perhaps with free Bungalows posh motor cars, good bank balance and a bid following of friends, relatives. Servants etc.

But get nearer them. It is all like mirage a false appearance. A mountain looks soft velvet like from a distance. Go near it is full of thorns, stones and serpents. For good health, peace of mind is very essential.

### **6<sup>th</sup> Principle: Forsake Anger and be patient:**

A man will lose his dignity on account of his anger. It will cause him misery. He who conquers anger will achieve all that he desires.<sup>27</sup>

Anger is the root cause of all sins. It is best to give up anger even against your worst enemy. Any man who protects himself must keep his anger under control otherwise his anger will lead him to his own destruction.

Anger gives birth to Jealousy, hatred, spite, revengefulness, destructive instinct, wild ideas, brain paralysis and temporary insanity any of which may lead to horrible crimes. It is poison to peace and calmness. It is poisonous to understanding. Anger is a manner of misunderstanding. To conquer others by anger is the method of fools.

A righteous demonstration of anger to avert evil without causing harm is some time productive of good. Be indifferent to those who seem to enjoy making you angry.

Vemana had a righteous anger against social evils which prevailed in those days.

His demonstration of anger only for the welfare of the society. One of the popular verses in Sumathi sataka says,

***Anger is enemy; gentleness is protector***

***Happiness is paradise and worry is hell.*<sup>28</sup>**

**Vemana says :**

Why did Sesha, king of serpents gnash his teeth with rags?  
Why did Surya through anger become cruel? By anger Vulkan  
became diminished in day light? Anger is unprofitable to any  
man.<sup>29</sup>

Vemana says in another verse,

By gentleness every object is pleasantly attained. It s a real  
victory by it our vows are preferred. I will lay any bet how great  
were the difficulties that Dharma Raja conquered by means of  
gentleness. (admirable and easy).<sup>30</sup>

Strife ceases when anger ceases when strife ceases wishes  
also cease. The connection that lead to future - Transmigrations  
cease when distinctions are done away and when the three  
qualities of virtue, passion and ignorance are dissolved, beautiful is  
permanent oh Vema!<sup>31</sup>

**7<sup>th</sup> Principle: Be constant in divine services**

Vemana believed in oneness of God. The God is omniscient,  
omnipresent and omnipotent.

Vemana says God is residing in your body mounting the vehicles (the senses) he rapidly drives the chariot. He ridicules who goes forests and mountain caves in search of God.

Thinking that great teachers do not live in the midst of people and that they live lonely in the forests or mountain caves. The foolish devotees need such persons to learn the path of solution. If unfortunately (or fortunately) they meet with a wild animal that animal will undoubtedly show them the path of salvation long before they find their Guru. How amusingly has Vemana exposed the stupidity of such people!

Vemana ridiculed satirically who were wandering in the forests and mountain hills in search of Gurus.

“ When there is burning light in his house why the man goes to the others house for a spark of fire?

He says the ignorant cannot understand the divinity which was in him.

Vemana was a staunch humanist like Goutama Buddha he was a man of boundless love, mercy and compassion but an uncompromising opponent of hypocrisy and humbug.

Like Vivekananda Vemana was a cyclonic patriot saint. A unique revolutionary and incomparable social reformer his heart bled to the poor.

Vemana was a determined opponent of injustice and oppression social, economic racial and political.

Vemana was the embodiment of fearlessness not merely physical courage but the total absence of fear from the mind born of unshakable faith in the Almighty and complete surrender unto his will. He strived for integral society to bring about social harmony between castes and religions.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century was critical period in the Telugu area. After the decadence of Vijayanagar empire and Mughal empire some of the Moghal nobles became poor and they joined with our Ryots as agricultural workers. Some of the muslims joined as cavalry men of local zamindars poligars and Jageerdars. Those were Shaiks, Sayyads, Moghals and pathans.

Vemana taught morals sympathetically to the muslims also.

“ Why go to Mecca? Why return thence? Is not lord here with us? Allah, Mohammad universally exists in his fullness?

“ They who know not the God who dwelt in their body they were like donkeys which carrying the Sandal wood on its back.”

Materialism and spiritualism both were mingled in Vemana like Ganga-Yamuna.

Parama Hansa Yogananda says every man creates a world of his own. Some people water the tender roots of life with caressing



streams of courageous smiles. But there are others who darken their days by permitting clouds of sadness.

Let us keep our ideals fixed in our minds. In our work let us feel we are doing Gods will in this universe, that we may offer the results of all our efforts at the feet of the Lord. Let us arise, wake up spirit and with determination and will power overcome all problems. Let us roll the stones of difficulties aside, climb over the fences of obstacles, wade the forbidding streams of bad habits, and go straight on ever looking to the divine light for our guidance. If our purpose is honest and our efforts are sincere, we cannot fail. Success is never handed out to anyone it has to be earned by perseverance, hard work, energy, patience and singleness of purpose. The past is gone the future is yet to come. The present is here. Today is the time.

Man should learn to solve the problems by soul guidance. Wisdom born of self-realization.

Every thing is spirit. If one can only realize this great truth matter-consciousness will be transmuted into spirit consciousness. "Always perform material actions (Karyam) and spiritual actions (Karma) without attachment. By doing all actions without attachment. One attains the highest (Bhagavadgeetha 3:19)



Nothing except God can satisfy you or wipe your miseries completely away. Your soul a separate part must find the whole to complete. If you think that you can be happy forgetting God you are mistaken. You are made in his image. You can never find never happiness in any thing because nothing is complete except God.

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## **Chapter-VII**

### **COMARATIVE PHILOSOPHY OF SRI VEMANA**



### **Comparative Study of Sri Vemana and Thiruvalluvar**

More than 20 centuries ago i.e before the birth of Christ there came into literary horizon of Tamilnadu a great personality called "Thiruvalluvar". He was a moralist philosopher and poet rolled into one. His name was valluvar. The prefix "Thiru" denotes the saintliness of the person. The word 'Kural' is derived from the kural-metre in which the composition of the poetry is set.

Thiruvalluvar gave out the sacred KURAL the finest of Tamil compositions filled with ethical, poetical words of wisdom, read by all mankind. The undying fame of the immortal work has secured translations in various languages both in Asia and Europe Rev.Father Bosehi rendered it in Latin.

Thirukkural contains 1330 couplets in 133 chapters.

Just like vemana, Thiruvalluvar's nativity, time and parents were also unknown.

The great Telugu revolutionary poet Sri Vemana's birth place, caste and time is controversial. Vemana belongs to 17<sup>th</sup> century. After self realization Sri Vemana traveled entire South India in his middle age. During that period Vemana listened "Thirukkural" verses and was attracted. Kural's simplicity and their thought provoking meanings impressed Vemana Thirukkural filled with universal truths.

Both the poets Thiruvalluvar and Sri Vemana have many similarities in their teachings and through his kural we can understand that Thiruvalluvar was leading a simple and humble life. He was always in meditative mood. As regards his religion and creed, it may not be correct to classify him either as a Jain, a saivite or Vaishnavite or a Buddhist. The whole of kural avoids classification.

Vemana renounced all worldly things. He discarded all religious ideologies. He strived for the welfare of common people. He led his life as a wandering saint and Raja Yogi along with sincere disciples.

### **Both were poets of the people**

Valluvar adopted the short stanza form 'Kural' for his poetic communication. It is just like Telugu Dwipada. His language was the expressive, living language spoken by the common people of his age. Welfare of the people was his ideal and his statement direct and effective.

Vemana's stanza form was short too. He chose the fourlined Ataveladi. His language also was the easy, natural language of the common people full of sayings and proverbs. His verses are so simple and memorable that hardly any Andhra exists who does not know at least a few of his poems by heart. Both were worshippers of One God (Monists) Valluvar believed in one God. He prayed to the one universal God the creator of the world before beginning to write his

great book. That Vemana too was a believer in one God Siva the universal power.

### **About Caste System**

Valluvar did not condemn caste system as explicitly as Vemana did. One of the Kurals No 972 reads thus when all human beings are born equal. Differences arise only on account of their trades and patterns of behaviour. This thought of Valluvar's resembles the adage in Sanskrit Janmana Jaayathe Sidrah, Karma na Jaya the dwijah". All are Sudras when born their deeds make them Vysyas, Kshatriyas and Brahmins. Let us now look at the progressive view print expressed by Vemana. He said that all human race belonged to only one caste. God has created all human beings equal of whatever caste they may be. Then how can one tell that one is high and the other is low? Therefore, men should give up all differences of caste and religion and became one caste.

### **On Poverty**

Poverty is the most terrible of evils according to both poets. There is nothing more harmful to man than poverty. He must overcome this evil in order to develop his potentialities to the fullest extent.

The Devil of poverty comes into this world and destroys this world as well as the other. It deprives man of peace not only in this life but also in the life after death. (Kurals 1041, and 1042). Vemana

has compared poverty to a forest fire that consumes every thing. Want is like forest fire. It destroys both the person himself and those who approach him. Even to think of poverty is a great sin. It is therefore, the duty of every man to acquire wealth.

### **On Charity**

The wealthy people must consider it their duty to help the deserving people. Charity should be given to those who are really in need. Help should not be rendered to others expecting some thing in return. Help must be altruistic said Valluvar (Kural 221) Vemana, too emphasized this he said give to the man who is in need.

### **On Anger**

Both the poets considered anger is a deadly enemy: Anger is the root cause of all sins. It is best to give up anger even against your worst enemy. Is there a greater joy to man's laughter (and happiness) than anger any man who wants to save himself must keep his anger under control. Otherwise, his anger will lead him to his own destruction (Kural 303, 304, 305)

Vemana Says "A man will lose his dignity on account of his anger. It will cause him misery. He who conquers anger will achieve all that he desires. Both believed in non violence.

Valluvar says "What is Karma? It is non-violence being compassionate to all living creatures. Violence destroys man's virtues.

Men should live with out any thought of violence. Only then can they attain salvation in this life (Kural No.321) and Vemana questioned how can killers of life ever attain salvation?

The subject matter of Kural touches all aspects of human life like house hold life; learning; friendship; self-control; citizenship, state craft; true ideals of patriotism etc. Thirukkural is noted for purity of its language, richness of its diction, lofty tone of its morality and the variety of its topics.

To conclude, Vemana and Valluvar were not only great poets but also great teachers. Their poetry and their teachings have earned them a permanent place in the hearts of lovers of literature and the good life.

#### **Some morals of Thiruvalluvar**

1. Out ward purity comes through water; purity of the heart is manifested in sincerity.
2. One may study many philosophies and clear doubts, but it is the well regulated life that ultimately avails and nothing else.
3. Discipline of life is more precious than life itself; for it is out of that discipline that life derives value.

#### **Comparative Philosophy of Sri. Vemana and Sarvajna :**

Sri Vemana and Sarvajna both were practiced various yogas for self realization. Both had the intention in Alchemy.

Sarvajna a famous progressive poet and a great social reformer of Karnataka was contemporary to Sri Vemana. Both were saint poets. Both have same ideology in reforming the society which was in great crisis. Palkuriki Somana a great Telugu revolutionary poet and a great thinker treated as chief disciple of Basaveswara. Sarvajna occupied the second place after Basaveswara in Karnataka.

Sarvajna mentioned in his poems that his father was Basavarasu a Aradhya Brahmin and his mother was a widow belongs to potter community. Sarvajna was not his original name. He named himself as Sarvajna. He thought that the society would look down him because of his birth. He used to say that he was a 'God given child to his parents and he was an incarnation of pushpadanta a demi God. He told that he was a precious pearl in a shell. Again he says the pearl's value is great but the shell's is nothing of value. Sarvajna was a natural poet like Vemana in Telugu. Both used simple and sweet local language to attract common people. They used their poetry as powerful weapons to destroy the superstitions and social evils in that critical period.

It is believed that Vemana and Sarvajna were met in their middle age and discussed on various topics. The writers of "Viswakavi-Viplava Yogi Vemana Vedasastram" mentioned in their book about their meeting. They said it was a book about their discussions in Kannada.

Both of the poets stressed on giving food for the poor. Man live on food. If there is no food they will die. So food is more than God. So Sarvajna says those who give starving, who speaks always truth, who loves the enemies they will attain salvation. Vemana also says like Sarvajna,

“One who gives food to the poor he will prosper and worshipped by the gods in heaven men swallowed knoweth that the food only in the Brahma”. “Food is equal to divine nector Brahmins take it as ‘ANTU’. The Trinity is the personification of divine nector.

Sarvajna was a rationalist endowed with a broad vision. He thought of every human problem as has own and tried to find a permanent solution to it. There is no mystery of human existence that he did not unravel. There is no field of human activity into which he did not enter. No human pain or pleasure escaped from his examination. The name ‘sarvajna’ fitted eminently to him in every way. According to Gandham Apparao’s Thesis Sarvajana’s Vachanas are on the lips of one and all the scholars, the layman, the peasant and the labourer. They suggest effective solutions to all the problems that man has to face in his day to day life.....

His cherished goal was the establishment of a social order in which all differences of class, creed or religion disappeared totally. He condemned all forms of superstition, including blind idol worship. He affirmed that the right path to salvation was that of

devotion coupled with knowledge (Jnana and Bhakthi). He exhorted the people again and again to exercise their reasoning powers and follow the path of truth, virtue and compassion.

Sarvajna's teachings are rationalistic and pragmatic and provide excellent food for thought to all serious minded persons the following 'Vachana's' on birth and caste reveal to us his critical insight.

"We all walk on the same earth, drink the same water, and in the end, are burnt into ashes by the same fire. Whence then do distinctions of caste and pedigree arise?"

"All human beings possess identical bodies consisting of identical organs. How then, can it be said that one is a 'Bhavi' and the other a Bhaktha; that this man is a swapacha and that man a Sudra?" "Is a lampless bright in the house of an outcaste? Never speak of high and low caste." "Pretend to agree with a fool. You must be a wary in dealing with him as you would be in moving your tongue between the two rows of teeth. It is not everywhere that one should tell the truth. We can understand from these Vachanas that Sarvajna was fully aware of the necessity of being practical and worldly wise.

Let us now see what kind of domestic life he wanted to live. "A cosy cottage, sufficient money for the necessities of life", a pair of bullocks, a milch cow, fire sons, a daughter-in-law who does not shirk work a wise grand mother, and a wife who knows husband's



mind-if you have these you can very well set fire to heaven says Sarvajna we find there his preference for the joint family system of the former times when co-operative labour and loyalty to the family resulted in domestic happiness and prosperity. Those were days of agricultural village economy when joint families flourished in the village every member contributing his share of honest labour for the common good. The basis of a socialist society is the sharing of labour in co-operation, and Sarvajna believed that a family or society organized the basis of honest, co-operative endeavour could easily become a heaven on earth.

The poet may be likened to the creator. He is a seer, a social reformer and a sincere teacher. Sarvajna the poet of the common man, has proved to us by his example that there is nothing that a true poet does not concern himself with. It is mother Karnataka's great good fortune to have had such an illustrious son.

Sri Vemana is kind hearted and great humanitarian. In his view God is in all living beings Jeevatma (individual soul) and paramatma (universal soul) are inseparable. Sri Vemana's heart filled with love and compassion. One who has no love and kindness he is called a beast with two legs. Sri Vemana believes in the conception of non-violence preached by Lord Buddha. His heart bleeds when he saw animals being killed during sacrifices. He could

not tolerate the wickedness of some of the Brahmins performing the sacrifices.

Is one living being kills another it is like killing God himself ponder over this and you will realize that 'Jeeva' and 'Siva' are one. He questions how these killers attain salvation. He says God is all loving and all merciful there-fore follow the path of love and non-violence.

Vemana went further, even if you have a worst enemy in your custody do not do any harm him. Render him necessary help with rightousness and leave him away. Lord Buddha says only the love and compassion bestow the perfect Bliss (Nirvana).

In all aspects the ideals of both the poets Sarvajna and Vemana are close and similar. But they differs in the issue of non-violence. Sarvajna the great Kannada poet says that it was utterly impossible for man to live without hurting other living creatures. He went to the extent of saying that there was no such thing as death therefore no killing of life (Jeeva himsa). Here are two Vachanas of Sarvajna in which he ridicules the doctrine of non-violence, of the Jain.

“One half of the living creatures on the earth subsists on living things that can move and the other half on living things that cannot move. Life subsists on life. I do not know of any living creatures that

live on life less things when one creature eats another creature and perpetuation of life.”

When one looks at non violence from a rationalist point of view, it may appear to be impracticable. But there is no doubt that non violence is very essential if man has to develop in himself, compassion and humanity; for only through them could he promote universal peace. Man needs both rationalism and compassion.

Both Vemana and sarvajna were progressive poets similar in many respects. But on this one question of non violence, they thought differently and expressed directly opposite views.

### **Comparative study of Sri Vemana and Ravidas**

**Ravidas** the cobbler a fellow disciple with Kabir of the same great master Swami Ramananda. Ravidas followed the path of the service of man. He knew only too well of the thorns that bestrew it, in as much as he had to remove them one by one in his progress. His attitude is summed up in his song. What loss of this body be torn to pieces. Thy servant only fears lest his love grow less.

In his days there used to be frequent gatherings of pilgrims bent on the spiritual quest, and their numberless followers. On such occasions Ravidas would look after old and decrepit, the woman and children with unwearied devotion. His enthusiastic zeal brought fervent youths flocking round him to join in what he called the five fold obeisances by way of service. But there was also something in

Ravidas which brought even queens to his feet. Mirabai the famous devotee of Krishna came at a later stage of her development to sit at the feet of the cobbler saint, who worshipped the divinity of unmanifest form and scoffed at ritual and asceticism. There are many wonderful stories widely known in public about Ravidas. Five gold pieces. Ravidas appears to have been of the same mind as Kabir who says "Sufficient be thy toilsome endeavor thine own living to make and help others" and he thankfully accepted from providence his daily reward of five gold pieces (as he called the gifts of five senses). We may like wise surmise that the hidden treasure of the story by means of which Ravidas was supposed to have built his rest house for wayfarers was but the wealth of devotion to toil and service which underlay his character. In his songs Ravidas said,

How could this iron have become burmshed gold

Unless touched by the gem ( of divine grace)

That is what Ravidas himself says of the touchstone of the legend of the divinity of man he speaks in terms of his own trade. "Under the vast vault of blue lives the divinity clothed in hide." Vision of higher Destiny Born and bred in the chamar caste in those days of social narrowness and intolerance. It is wonderful to find Ravidas on the one hand pursuing unashamed his lowly trade and on the other illumined with so great a vision of man's high destiny. He does not hesitate to avow. "Low was I born-low in caste, in rank,

in trade know ye citizens born am I of the caste known as chamaras  
Ignorant, despised carriers of carcasses to and fro” But that leaves  
him no doubt of the greatness of man’s spiritual heritage.

By much merit have I earned this human birth. Let it not be in  
vain for lack of care

Let not mine be the plight of the king who asleep on his regal  
bed dreamt he was a begger His pray was “Fill, oh fill my cup  
withlight. The light that’s in sun and moon He who drinketh of the  
light before him, what fear hath he of death?

A remarkable poem of Ravidas which was attracted and  
imitated by rabindranath Tagore: Spiritual Utopia: It is interesting to  
find that even so long ago Ravidas had his vision of Utopia.  
Begumpur is the city called. No suffering of body or mind there. No  
taxes, no impositions, No accumulation, no possessions

No oppression no fear

This is the city I have reached where welfare ever abides;

O Brother! Cries Ravidas the chamar

All are my comrades who dwell there in

In view such revolutionary sentiments of Ravidas, It is not  
surpirings that he got into trouble with the ruling authorities and  
had to suffer persecution. We can easily imagine that the above

cited poem of Ravidas the spiritual utopia may be the inspiration  
for the Tagor's famous poem

***"Where the mind is without fear  
And the head is held high,  
Where knowledge is free  
Where the world has not been broken up  
Into fragments by narrow domestic walls".....***

Ravidas was not one of those easy going optimists who can see  
no evil in the world. He asks:

Where to get pure offerings for the worship of the Lord?

The milk is fouled in the teat sucked by the calf,

The flower is fouled by the bee, the water by the fish

The snake nests in the 'Sandal wood tree

Every where are nectar and poison mingled together

His own answer is yet if I offer up body and mind in  
reverence

Through grace shall I reach him who Transcendeth all.

And he says for them :

What impels me thus to seek my beloved?

The touchstone awaits the iron

Mercy descends on the fallen and low

Lowest of the low and I, Lord keep me ever at thy feet.

Vemana the poet of 17<sup>th</sup> century emphasised every body should work hard to earn money for the lively hood and to help others.

He exhorted to earn wealth and use it for charity and the good of the fellow beings.

Vemana was at the same time theist and atheist. There were many similarities in the lives of self realized persons in the all over India.

It is too wonderful to the readers and researchers the above mentioned song of Ravidas “ Where to get pure offerings... was introduced as it is in Telugu language by an unknown saivite poet.

***“Emi chetura linga Emichetura***

***Ganga udakamu Techchi Neeku***

***Lingapujalu chedamante***

***Gangaloni chepalannee***

***Engilmatunnayi Linga”<sup>5</sup>***

### **Comparative Study of Sri Vemana and Kabir**

Kabir das was one of the greatest mystic saint of his time. He was born about 1397 A.D. and lived until 1517. The life of kabir was full of miraculous deeds. His teachings are blend of devotion and wisdom. He was a powerful philosopher and poet. His songs are still sung in thousands of homes in India. He belonged to Hindu parentage. A Brahmin widow gave birth to Kabir and left the baby in

a lake near Banaras. A muslim weaver Niru adopted the child and brought him up as a muslim weaver. The child was named Kabir which means great in the Arabic language. Kabir was reflective from his very childhood. He became a disciple of Swamy Ramananda. Kabir's son was Kamal. Kabir strived to loosen the chains of superstitions, to integrate society, to bring about social harmony between castes and religions. He preached with humanitarian outlook. Kabir says " while making an idol the sculptor would beat hard with hammer and chisel. If the idol gets life it will swallow the sculptor at once." In this manner Verman criticized blind idol worship by asking,

If a stone is God will not heave the offerings be swallowed by him." "In the womb there was no caste and creed. The entire universe was created from Brahma. All castes born from the womb of Brahma. All are brother if they get together. Kabir seriously questions why these applications of ash on the body created by mud. Why these bathings in water? Why these chantings of Mantras? Why these countings the beads on rosaries? Why these meaningless prayers at Masjids and Mandirs? Why these fastings and why these journeys to Kaba and Kasi. Kabir criticized all the outer activities in the name of God. He strived for social harmony between the castes and religions. Like Kabir Vermana also scoffed imposters, hypocrites and charlatons who were deceiving the common people in the name



of God. The essential truth of all religions is the same. The following verse of Vemana brings out this idea beautifully.

“Cows may be of different colours but their milk is of one colour. Though flowers differ in their colours they are all utilized for the same purpose that is in worshipping the one God, Darsanas are varied but God is one.”<sup>1</sup> Vemana also emphasized to bring friendliness in all castes, communities and religions. Kabir sings,

***The tongue is moving in the mouth***

***The rosary is moving in the hand***

***The mind is moving through out the world***

***What is the use?<sup>2</sup>***

“With moving eyes counting the rosary beads, chanting the mantras idly without doing any work cheating the people to fill their bellies are worst. Those are all parasites”.<sup>3</sup> Kabir and his sayings are widely known. He was a born mystic. Spiritual progress came naturally to him. He no need to carve out a path. But those whose spiritual endeavour is on the ethical plane have to follow some definite course. So when devotees came to Kabir for guidance along the mystic way he was at a loss how to advise them. All had to say is:

Path presupposes distance

If he be near, no path needest though at all

Verily it maketh me smile

To hear of a fish in water athirst

This truth is too near to the sayings of Vemana.

Is he whom you call God in another land? He is in the body with the Goddess Mounting vehicles of senses driving his chariot.<sup>4</sup> “Until you find the thing you have lost you require a light only so long after finding it why keep the light? After becoming God why retain the body”.<sup>5</sup>

“Search and view thy self; thou art the living being. Behold the great (Atma) existent and thou shall become the spirit. Earth and thou shall become the spirit. Earth and heaven shall depart and delusion himself be destroyed.”<sup>6</sup>

As a mystic social reformer Kabir condemned social inequality, injustice, exploitation and other all evils. He was attracted by the modern scientists, thinkers, scholars, devotees as well as disciples and devotees. His poetry (songs) name and fame live forever in the country. Vemana stood always on the side of downtrodden poor who were helpless and hopeless. The popular Hindu scholar ‘prabhakar machave’ says in his book which was published by the National Sahitya Academy ‘Kabir’s language is Sadhukkari. Vemana told his verses in simple and sweet common Telugu language. But his thoughts and preachings are emotional and potential. Kabir and Vemana both were enlightened prophets who sacrificed their lives for the welfare of mankind. Their names will remain as long as the history remains.

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**Chapter- VIII**  
**CONCLUSION**

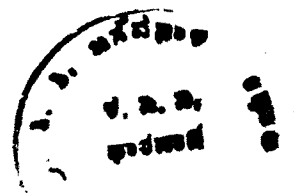
It is unknown when and where the first verse of Vemana with the crowning line "Viswadabhirama Vinura Vema" revealed from his mouth. It is like a banyan tree spreading the branches world wide. The roots given off by the branches hang down to penetrate the ground.

Now there are thousands of verses of Vemana they came to light and became popular are confusing the readers. It is difficult to find out the original verse of Sri. Vemana from the innumerable.

It is wonder that the poems of Sri. Vemana were translated into Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam in his life time. There is no single person who does not know the verses of Vemana in the Telugu land whether he is literate or illiterate.

Karuna Sri. Jandhyala papaya Sastri says a small kindergarten student also easily can say two or three verses at least. A natural poet Kavichodappa wrote a memorable verse about Sri. Vemana. "One who did not wet in rain and one who did not stun or shock from Sri. Vemana's verses we cannot see in the whole Telugu land. In another version of this poem says we cannot see equal poet to Sri. Vemana in this land.

His verses were charged with such quivering passion and transparent sincerity. That they touched the innermost chords of the people and his message found a ready lodgment in their hearts.



He had such magic in his words such power in his expression.  
Such sway over his fellow beings.

A French missionary Abbe Dubois (1770-1848) who spent about thirty years in South India (1792-1823) who first brought out to the notice of the Europeans the verses of Sri. Vemana which were already popular in Tamil and Kannada translations. In his book "Hindu Manners Customs and Ceremonies" (First edition 1978 Oxford New Delhi) he wrote "One of the most famous is Sri. Vemana whose poems originally written in Telugu have since been translated into several other languages. His writings from which I have seen several extracts appear to me to be most interesting and are distinguished by discernment and independence."

Through this we can imagine Sri. Vemana's greatness and popularity. It is clear that Sri. Vemana traveled entire South India on foot or on horse back in his middle age along with some disciples. Tirukkural inspired him. As a Veerasaivite he read Basavana's devotional songs and Vachanas and the influence of Basaveswara was on him was great.

Nannaya (Battu) the first Telugu translator of the Mahabharatha had taken the help of Narayana Bhattu the poet and scholar of Karnataka. Krishna Devaraya the great was praised as "Karnatandhra Sarva Bhouma" (The Monarch of Andhra and Karnataka)

Kavi Sarva Bhoudha Srinatha had close connections with Karnataka. Srinatha stayed for some time in Karnataka When he was in a poor condition and suffered. He says "Tallee, Kannada Rajya lakshmi Daya teda nenu Sreenathudan"

(Mother, Karnataka have you no mercy on me what do you think I am Sreenatha) Again Sreenatha says in another place, "Naa Kavithambu Nijamu Karnata Bhaasha" (My language is really Karnataka)

The word Karnataka has another meaning i.e. melodious.

The renowned popular Kannada poet Sarvajna was contemporary of Sri. Vemana. Both met and discussed various subjects. There are many similarities in their life and poetry. Sarvajna supports violence but Sri. Vemana opposes it. That is the only difference between them. The writers of "Viswakavi – Vipplava yogi Vemana Vedasastram" say that there was a book in Kannada about the meeting of Sri Vemana and Sarvajna.

In those days Sanskrit was highly esteemed in Royal courts and scholar meetings (panditha parishaths). The then contemporary Sanskrit literature outshone the other languages. Veera Saivism acted a prominent role in the religious field of South India. The founder of Veera Saiva religion was Basaveswara of Karnataka. Veerasaivism was not an ordinary movement. It was a revolutionary ideology of the middle ages which not only protested

against the age old Brahmanical Varnashrama Dharma. It denounced every aspect of the Vedic religion and carried on an relentless fight against Sanatana Dharma.

Basaveswara was treated as the incarnation of Nandeewara by Saivites. From the boyhood he was a "Jnani." In the beginning he served as a minister in the court of Jaina king Bijjala. For the sake of people he killed Bijjala who was cruel and careless about the welfare of poor people. Basaveswara became king of Kalyani in Karnataka.

Basaveswara was a humanist as well as spiritualist. He was believer in one God Siva. Siva is universal power. He discarded caste system and hated all the Vedic rituals. He sacrificed all his for life the sake of poor lower class people. He always stood on the side of depressed and diseased. He distributed King's treasury and wealth to the poor. He gave away everything of his own.

In his view there is only one pure caste who wears linga the symbol of Siva. He hated the divisions in the society. There are no upper lower classes. All human beings are brothers on this earth. He thought all are equal in the eyes of God. Though he belonged to upper caste and Royal status he lived a simple life. Kalyana Basaveswara changed his name as Basavana.

In the beginning Vemana was inspired by the preachings of Basaveswara. His poetry was under the influence of Basavana



Vachanas. Vemana liked and followed almost all the fundamental principles of Veera Savism in his entire life.

Basaveswara told for the first time in the 12<sup>th</sup> century “ The source of all things is effort.” “Kayikave Kailasam” work is worship

His aim was –

***“Sarva Jana Sukhaya  
Sarva Jana Hitaya”***

(Work for the happiness of All – Work for welfare of all)

Again Basaveswara says- “If you give a meal to a man you only feed him for a day but you teach a man to grow or earn food you feed him for a life time.” Basaveswara renounced worldly life in search of Salvation. He gave a prominent respectable place to the women in the principles of Veerasaivism. He respected all castes and all professions in the same manner.

He worshipped “Kudali Sangam Deva.” His devotional songs and Vachanas were more than four lacs. Even to day they are on the lips of Karnataka Savites. They were translated into Telugu by many writers.

Vemana followed the path of Basaveswara. He was a practical philosopher who had firm faith in constructive human endeavour. We see him as a humanist and as a believer in human progress. As he belonged to a peasant family he was used to working hard and therefore, he exhorted his fellowmen to live a life of peaceful

industry. Sri. Vemana preached this basic principle till the end of his life.

Some historians say about Basaveswara he was a powerful religious prophet and some others say he was mere a great social reformer. Palkuriki Somana a rebel poet in Telugu literature, wrote a great social prabandha Basava Puranam. The life of Basaveswara. There are many episodes and characters. All were taken from the contemporary society who were pure devotees of Siva from lower classes.

Somana opposed old tradition. He selected a new special native Telugu metre named Dwipada(Twin lined) to his poetry. Basava Puranam is a honourable Holy scripture for all Saivites. It is a Parayana Grandha also. Somana wrote Panditharadhya Charitram and Vrishadhipa Satakam.

Basava Puranam is a favourite book of Vemana. He says - "Papaharanamounu Basava Puranambu" means "who ever reads Basava Puranam will lose all his sins." The English civil servant Charles Philip Brown (1798-1884) who rendered yeoman service to the Andhra country through his Telugu- English and English to Telugu dictionaries and the first printing of several Telugu poetical works was the great benefactor who published an English translation of several hundred verses of Vemana in 1829 and 1839. His attempts to popularize Vemana's verses through their

prescription to the school children in Madras were foiled by the orthodox Telugu pundits who hated Vemana's heterodox views.

Abbe Dubois the French missionary also observed incidentally that Vemana belonged to recent times and such "Satirical and revolutionary works" were suppressed by the Brahmins who were the intellectual leaders and ideologies of the feudal ruling classes.

Vemana's next English translator was Charles Grover. His book was "The Folk Songs of Southern India (1871)." In his article in the Madras Christian College Magazine William camp Bell described Vemana as a poet of the people and added "an earnest reformer who felt that he had a great mission to his country men and refused to allow any consideration to interfere with his fulfillment of it." He denounced asceticism with the vigour and earnestness which would have done credit to a Wychiffe or Luther. The English historian Vincent Smith quoted four verses of Vemana from Grover's Folk Songs of Southern India in 1919 when he wanted to create a criticism of caste by an Indian reformer of the past. It was only after C.R. Reddy in his book of literary criticism Kavitwa tathwa Vicharamu (1914) praised Vemana's greatness for creative imagination for wit and humour, for originality and boldness of expression and for capacity to debunk superstitions and to expose pretensions" that the Telugu scholars gave up their conspiracy of silence and began to write commentaries on his

political genius and biographical accounts on the life and work of Vemana with appreciation. In the 20th century, since 1914 Telugu scholars have brought out several hundreds of pages of biographies and literary criticism of the personality and poetical genius of Vemana. Rallapalli Anantha Krishna Sarma set the pace for such critical assessments of Vemana in his Raghupati Venkata Ratnam Naidu memorial lectures published by the Andhra University in 1929. Since then the volume of criticism has grown with every year. During these decades the works of Tripuraneni Venkateswara Rao were published by Vemana Vikasa Kendra, Vijayawada 1981. Dr. N. Gopi (1980), Arudra (1974) have revealed to the reading public several remarkably modern dimensions of the personality and missionary Zeal of Vemana. A balanced estimation of historical role of Vemana has been made by Kambhampati Satyanarayana in his second volume of A Study of the History and Culture of the Andhras (People's Publishing House, New Delhi- 1983) well known book on Vemana was published by the Sahitya Academy in 1969, not only conventional historians like R.C. Mazumdar but also Soviet Historians (Antonava, Leven and Kotosky A History of India 2 volumes 1978, 1979) have not mentioned Vemana in their accounts of social awakening in modern India. Kambhampati Satyanarayana writing in 1983 has observed: "He is the first known poet of Andhra who could see not only the Gulf between the rich and the poor but also discern the process of transformation of caste into class

though his conception of class was not the modern scientific one which has not possible for his time. When Vemana was disgusted with the indifference of the rich to his appeals for charity to the poor and as a last resort he advocates the use of force to dispossess the rich and relieve the hunger of the poor “ Every man may give his own and this is no great matter to anyone, he alone can be called liberal who without hesitation takes the property of others and bestows in gifts.

To quote the words of Kambhampati Satyanarayana who concludes his comments as follows :

“Judged by any standard Vemana was the best of humanists the “Staunchest of rebels and the tallest of moralist whose philosophy sowed the path of enlightenment to the people who were groping in darkness, ignorance, and superstition.” Dr. Raghavan omitted the name of Vemana from his Patel Memorial lectures entitled “ The Great Integrators” ( 1966)

Reviewing the Bhakthi Renaissance K. Mazumdar (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan 1965 Bombay) also ignores Vemana in his list of Bhakthi saints poet. Ramakrishna Mukherji in his Rise and Fall of the East India Company (Berlin 1958) describes Vemana as a ‘the popular poet of Telugu among the other saint poets like Kabir, Chaitanya, Tukaram, Ramananda, Dadu, Lalla and others.

The renowned Bengali writer Binoy kumar Sarkar (1887-1949) observes in his book "The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology: The Devotional or Bhakthi Egalitarianism of the Tamil Kural has been carried forward on Vemana's verses to a pitch verging on revelation. In his sarcasm on inequalities of material possession he is no less radical and realistic than in his invectives against the disabilities engendered by caste distinction. Dr. Tarachand, the well known historian, has no place for Vemana in his account of the society and culture of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, India (Patel Memorial lecture New - Delhi 1961) And it is to enlighten students of modern Andhra and Indian History about the historical role of Vemana, in our renaissance that this essay has been written. According to C.P. Brown who was first compiler and translator of Vemana verses, Vemana is a staunch devotee of Siva. Siva is formless. Vemana worships Linga (phallus) which is the symbol of Siva.

Maheshwara is called as Siva the Almighty. Sri. Vemana believed in Siva the Almighty and Siva Sakthi is universal power.

In the beginning of his verses Vemana pained the devotees and saint poets of Siva. He dedicated his poetry to his Guru Siddheswara and Lord Siva. He liked the ideals of Veerasaiva religion launched by the broad minded Basaveswara. Basaveswara has treated as the incarnation of Nandeeswara.

Vemana praised Siva the Lord and his Lingayaths in hundreds of his verses. He says Linga cult is greater than all religious cults. He preferred "Panchakshari" (Namassivaya) to enlighten the truth seekers. His mystic, spiritual verses are contained with Siva yoga, Siva tantra, Sivajnana. He explained yogic practices like Shatchakra nirupana (the clarification of six lotuses in the spine of human body) in his verses. His favourite holy scripture was Basava Puranam, written by Palkuriki Soman which deals the life history of Basavana and contains several stories of contemporary devotees of Siva who belongs to lower castes. Palkuriki Soman was the first rebel poet who turned a way from style, prosody and material. The Sanatana Vedic pandits neglected him and his poetry.

But Vemana praised the Basava Puranam with deep devotion. "Papaharana Mounu Basava puranambu" (Basavapuranam removes all sins and shows right way of living). The devotion of Siva is the resource of all his poetry. The Siva sakthi bestows love, Kindness, energy and peace.

There are so many fabricated fantasies and cock and bull stories prevailed in the Telugunadu. They were all rejected by the Historians and research scholars. According to C.P. Brown and other historians, Vemana was in a rich middle class family, at a village in Cuddapah district, Royalaseema. He belonged to Kapu

community. Land farming has their main profession. His birth date was around 1650 A.D. There was a remarkable verse of Vemana about his caste. "Vemana dedicated his whole life in the Kapu community by serving Dharma to the mankind for his liberation He thinks Kapus are innocents and hard workers.

Because of a pet child he had full freedom in his large family. No body objects him whatever he needs receives immediately. By birth Vemana was intelligent, kind and has compassionate. As a boy he had all good virtues. He loved all and loved by all. He moved freely with his fellow beings who belonged to all castes and creeds. He had taken formal education at some pandits. Within a short period he learned to read and write, thoroughly.

He was fond of fine arts, and interested in composing verses with his creative thinking. Vemana entered into the youth stage. This was a great changing period in his life. His charming and dynamic personality attracted many a lot of Devadasis and Basivis. They had lost their original purity and became prostitutes in course of time. At last he fell in the trap of a beautiful Devadasi. He loved her heartfully. She also loved him. He was filled up with lust. He entered directly into the house of Devadasi. Nobody stopped him. He enjoyed day and nights with her. He thought that his love was an angel and her house was paradise. He forgot all. But the mother of devadasi was evil minded. She was in lust of money. She



was harassing Vemana for Jewelry. Vemana has continuously giving her money, jewelry and other valuable things from his house. In course of time Vemana became pauper. He quarreled with his brother for his share of property. His brother calmly divided his share and gave Vemana. Vemana gave it to the mother of devadasi. Some more days had gone smoothly. Devadasi's mother was not satisfied. Again she demanded more wealth from Vemana and insulted him nastily. When he became empty handed she closed her doors for Vemana forever.

Then Vemana became helpless and hopeless. Deserted Vemana was alone. There was no sympathy from villagers or relatives. He left the village disappointedly.

He roamed village to village in the country in search of truth as a beggar. The divine spark in Vemana's heart forced him. He joined Gosayu gang to learn the art of Alchemy. But it was failed. Some Hattayogees deceived him. In his long journey he met many saints, Gurus and Mahatmas. He discussed with her advanced saints. His aim was to see God.

One day Vemana received a divine message in his meditation. He was shocked "Let the divine within you be your guide. Feel that great presence in you and about you. Behold his light everywhere. Be brave and ready to lay all that you are and all that you have at the alter of his service. Live selflessly, act selflessly and be filled

with joy of the eternal. Be a flame of the expression of the universal Reality. Shed your fears and doubts. Be fixed like a rock in the awareness of your death less nature and earn ever lasting peace, power and freedom”.

Vemana was filled with ecstasy. After getting realization he became dumb. Now he was in the abode of peace and compassion. There were mutual struggles and wars between Bouddha and Jaina religions till 13th Century. They have lost their reputation and become powerless. In the times of Vemana the Sanatana “Vedic Varna Vyavastha” took place and raised its ugly head.

In this period Vemana believed in the principles of Veerasaivism, founded by Basaveswara, the great social reformer. Vemana discarded all the religions along with Lokayathikas who were mere worshippers of their own physical and material lust.

In those days corruption, wickedness, bribery, social injustice, exploitation, illegal sexual contacts, untouchability, unbearable poverty of low class people and other evils were permeated in all fields of the country. On seeing this decadence of whole society Vemana suffered too much internally and moved. He decided to face these evils with his extraordinary potential poetic faculty and reform it without caring hindrances and obstacles.

More than hundred years before Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vemana launched an uncompromising crusade against traditional

theology and Sanatana Dharma. Although his first lessons appeared to have been learnt in the company of Veerasaivites, the Veerasaivism played a revolutionary role in moulding the thoughts of the people. He was disillusioned with most of the religions sects which were influencing groups of people in South India. They were degenerated into mendicant Sanyasis who put on saffron robes to attract the people who offered them food and momentary gifts. Vemana disassociated himself from all such false prophets. His honest mission and poetical genius attracted intellectuals and peasant patrons who looked after his elementary necessities of food, clothing and shelter all over South India, and preserved his thousand verses for posterity. We should therefore regard him as our first social reformer; pioneer, philosopher, revolutionary poet and a veritable morning star of our awakening. Like Swami Vivekananda he was a gigantic saint poet, a unique revolutionary and incomparable staunch social reformer. His heart bled for the poor and the downtrodden.

Religion means generally 'Mata' or Dharma. 'Mata' means a way to peace, or a path to truth or a manner to attain salvation. Dharma means duty in common usage. But Dharma is a multifaceted Crystal. It is beyond all definitions. Dharma is a miracle, mystic and marvelous word in spiritual literature. Love,

compassion, honesty and peace and other all divine virtues mingled in the word Dharma.

Buddha used Dharma in the place of God. Buddha's scripture is called Dammapada. "Ekam sath Vipra Bahudhavadhanthi" (Truth is one. Though there are hundred versions.) Some wisemen who are enlightened say that religion means realization. Realization is not an easy thing to understand. Once Vivekananda said only a few of the enlightened persons who reached the mountain peak of salvation come back again to this earth because of their unfathomable love, compassion and sympathy for the welfare of mankind to liberate the people from all worldly chains. They come to this earth to serve the people. To save the innocents from cruel beings, to console the depressed, deserted and diseased; to wipe out the tears of orphans and handicapped who are suffering physically, mentally and spiritually. They act selflessly. They show a path to the pathless wonderers. They preach love, unity and purity in the society. Vemana may be one of them. Though Vemana was God intoxicated but he had the social consciousness also. In quest of truth Vemana roamed in all paths. He faced many difficulties and obstacles in his long journey. He had done many yogic practices. He mixed sometime with Rasavadins to know the art of Alchemy. He met gurus, saints, Mahatmas and Siddhapurushas who were advanced spiritually and discussed with them. He experienced

many failures and disappointments. But tirelessly he continued his quest for truth.

At last by the grace of his paramagurus Vemana attained enlightenment. He attained the abode of peace and truth. He renounced worldly life and entered into the work field to fulfill his ideals with spiritual social consciousness. Vemana was a believer in one God and a great humanist, a practical philosopher. There is no ambiguity anywhere in his verse. Contemporary poet Tukaram says, He who worships God must stand distinct from Him/so only shall he know the joyful love of God for if he say that God and he are one that joy, that love shall vanish instantly away. Like Vemana the saint poet Kabir also said

***"O Servant where does thou seek me?"***

***Lo! I am beside thee***

***I am neither in temple nor in Mosque***

***Kabir is the child of Allah and Ram"***

***What is religious life?-***

"By reason of the experience of pleasure and pain man improves his ability to realize. The sensations pleasure and pain are felt within the five senses whereas the realizations of causes, effects and results for all appearances and disappearances are understood by the sixth sense.

By realization only, man finds out the Virtues of his deeds in order to regulate his sensations for the most harmonious living.

Such findings of virtues are responsibilities for the code of good conduct and behaviour of individuals and for framing the constitution of Human rights in the society. The teachings and writings of wise men and religious head in the history of mankind, are regulated under the experiences of sensations and realizations in life. When one is able to understand the basis of pleasure and pain the constitution of the society and the law of nature and live harmoniously, one determines that such a method of living only is virtuous and best way of life. As long as one is not able to realize the correct method of life one should live only under the directions of wise men. It is such a method of living that is called religious life. Says a great saint Yogiraj Vethathri Maharshi.

May all be happy. May all be healthy. May every one get to see only good and may no one suffer! Is what Vemana aspires for. Vemana's philosophy stands on the bedrock of Humanism. We have been taught that religion backed by righteousness called Dharma facilitates peace and harmony in every society. Religion also elevates man from the morass of just temporal concerns and inspires him to achieve emancipation from all bondage. This is where one finds the relevance of Humanism at all times. As the world is God, Service of the world, specially of humanity, is a capital means of pleasing the Lord. The world needs many kinds of goods and services and it is wrong to suggest that the only true

servants of God are those who teach religion, meditation or yogic exercises.

By serving society through one's professional and other duties, one worships the Lord and attains the highest perfection. On the other hand those contribute nothing to the commonweal are thieves and sinners. According to the Bible all unproductive trees will be chopped off and burnt. The spiritual quality of even religious works like worship and meditation depends on the degree to which they benefit society. People working for the good of all build a heaven; those working for themselves alone build a hell, for all works done for personal gain make for bondage; Those done for the good of other make for liberation.

God is personally present in every act of self sacrifice; in fact whatever benefits a living creature benefits God Himself. Anyone engaged in a good act is in a state of union with the supreme. Union with God requires identification with the world, specially with living creatures and this is not possible without their living service, without positive action to promote their interests and development works of sacrifice, austerity and charity and all other duties should never be abandoned but should be performed at all events, renouncing attachment and fruit. This is Bhagavad Geetha considered and best opinion. Swami Vivekananda was very emphatic that the difference between spirituality worldliness is not

the difference between sacred and secular works but between unselfishness and selfishness. The difference between God and the devil, he said is nothing except in unselfishness and selfishness. Again, he said if you seek your own salvation you will go to hell. It is the salvation of others that you must seek, and even if you have to go to hell in working for other that is worth more than to gain heaven by seeking your own salvation.

In the Bhagavatha too laid the greatest stress on "Loka Kalyana" (Welfare of the universe). It said "Look, how noble minded this trees are ! They live only for the good of others. Theirs is the best. They sustain other forms of life of all living beings. Those who do good to others through their lives, wealth, wisdom and their words, they alone justify their birth." Vivekananda says as after so much Tapasya: "I have known that the highest truth is this : He is present in every being! These are all the manifolding forms of him. There is no other God to seek for. He alone is worshipping God who serves all being." This is the Vemana's religious philosophy. Vemana says poverty is a terrible handicap to the mankind. Poverty is a wild fire that can destroy all values and virtues. So everybody must leave no stone unturned to make money by the sweat of his brow. He tried to bring home to the peasants the need for self-reliance and self sufficiency in the matter of money. Exhorted



everybody to earn wealth and use it for charity, and good of the fellow beings.

One who has money his caste upgrades. One who loses his wealth and becomes pauper he is degraded by the society. Wealth is the criterion for the status of man in this greedy society. People think it is a panacea for all physical, mental, social diseases. He who does not do any charity to the poor or needy in this life he is called fool and his personal life will become a hell. He cannot achieve salvation. The miser who keeps the wealth in the earth secretly his life is useless. Excess of wealth is also dangerous to an ordinary man. It leads him downwards through bad company and bad habits. He will be a egoist and pompous. He looks down his fellow beings. The real inner satisfaction which can come from service to others. This is the only way to achieve peace and happiness.

***Kabirdas said in a Hindi poem,***

***“Paanee badhayo naamen badhugodam***

***Donon Hath uleechie yate sayano Kar”***

“If wealth increases a wise man should disburse it with both hands as fast as possible. Other wise he is doomed just like when a boat springs to leak and fills with water. The only way from saving it from sinking is to bale out the water with both the hands as fast

as possible. This is the only way you can save the boat. This is the only way you can save yourself.”

Welfare of women was one of the main principles of Veerasaivism launched by Basaveswara. Some of the scholars, historians and pandits say that Vemana was a misogynist (anti woman). If we go through his verses this opinion is wrong.

As an ardent social reformer he blamed the profession of prostitution. He rebuked the prostitutes and harlots who were spoiling the peaceful families and creating disturbances in the society.

In his opinion woman is mother, sister and daughter.

He says in a verse,

***One who knows his mother knows Goddess***

***One who knows earth knows heaven***

***One who knows earth and heaven knows himself.***

In an another verse he says Samsara yoga is the best of all yoga practices. He condemned male domination and female suppression in the society. Both men and women are equal in the eye's of God. Vemana explains an ideal husband is one who tries to do his best for his wife and his family as long as he lives. He does not neglect his home. His wife is well thought of in the community because he never belittles her, children love him admire him.

He used harsh words like Lanja etc. In those days Lanja is synonym to Vesya in usage. Even today also we can find out the village names like Lanjala Kota, Lanjala Dibba etc in Andhra Pradesh. He says men and women are equal by birth. He condemned male superiority and domination in the society. God never forgives them who look down the womenfolk. Woman is definitely in no way inferior to man. The home is a cooperative organization and flourishes on the principle of division of labour. If a man earns and the wife stays at home, it does not mean that the woman is a parasite and a slave.

Let us understand and realize that man and woman complement each other in the growth and flowering of each individual's personality to its maximum perfection. Neither can claim to be successful without each other's cooperation, love and understanding.

As a moral poet Vemana is unique in Telugu literature. His verses attract all classes of society with a sense of humour and wit and wisdom. After four hundred years his moral verses still shine like precious gems. He says in a verse, "the real blue sapphire one is enough why the use of glittering artificial stones a lot?" Morality is the basis of Humanity. Love, compassion, peace, honest and other good qualities combined in Humanity. Morality leads the life of men in a joyful and peaceful manner in the chaotic society.

Being a progressive poet and a social reformer he strived to teach the purpose of life through self effort. He aspires to liberate man from his threefold suffering physical disease, mental inharmonies and spiritual ignorance. He urges to encourage "plain living and high thinking" and to spread a spirit of brotherhood among all people by teaching the eternal basis of their unity; kinship with God and to overcome evil by good. Sorrow by joy, cruelty by kindness, ignorance by wisdom.

Rationalism and religion through realization of the unity of their underlying principles and to serve mankind as one's large self. A joyful, peaceful life needs good behaviour good character and a harmonious mind setting. There are many forces at work seeking to destroy, this balance, and produce disease, fear, poverty, failure and unhappiness. Those forces attack the individual to upset his physical, mental spiritual balance. The remedy is known for ages by the great saints and preceptors to face these problems. But the man is unable by his ignorance to use the remedy in a reasonable way.

Ignorance is the root cause of all bad habits and all social evils.

Paramahansa Yogananda says "Tears and sighs on the battle fields of life are the liquid cowardice of weak minds those who give

up the fight become prisoners within the walls of their own ignorance”.

He continues “ your entire motive must be service. The main purpose of any business should be service. It should not be money making. The store that gives best service and handles the products is the one we like. Just remember that you must serve in order to please others.”

Not selfishness but unselfishness is the governing principle in the law of prosperity. Each one of us must live for the other. In getting for your self you should get others too. Religious principles should be lived Jesus himself said “Sell all that thou hast and distribute into the poor” (Luke 18:22) And Gandhiji said “ each for all and all for each”.

Vemana was an independent thinker with social, political, moral and spiritual consciousness. He was a light of 17<sup>th</sup> century, in South India with a revolutionary voice. He combined in him the spiritual power of Vivekananda, the political saintliness of Gandhiji and the faith in the masses of Marx. No man can achieve such an attention of masses in his own life time as Vemana did. The moral and spiritual approach of Vemana to all issues political, social and economic distinguished him from the rest of humanity.

Today we have in abundance of all the requisites of comfort and happiness, far more than ancestors had. Yet we are better off

than before. Even though over the last century, our happiness has not increased. Virtues are on the decline. Vices are on the rise. Once man allows his inherent peace to be disturbed and makes room in his heart for greed and desires, a host of evils come in. Most evils in society are due to this demon of desire.

Crimes like theft, robbery, decoity are daily occurrences in all places. Gruesome murders accompany efforts of grab property. The struggle for existence has become so acute that pretty squabbles develop into armed fights. Prisons have ceased to be deterrents. Crimes against women have brought national disgrace to us. Government alone cannot solve these problems. On the contrary, the visual media like Television, films etc by displaying violence and sex day in day out distort young minds especially in the formative period of their life. Crime is looked upon an adventure and not as a dishonorable behavior. When values turn topsy turvy, society degenerates and disintegrates.

Rampant corruption in our country has tuned our democracy into a mockery. Democracy became a devil in disguise. Money occupied the throne. Love, compassion, truth and Dharma are dumb. There is no place for humanity. Corruption in administration has spread its tentacles form top to bottom. It is an open secret that nothing moves at the bottom level without greasing the palms. A sub registrar does not register the document, a policeman does

not register a complaint, sanctioned loans and assistance are not disbursed, due payments from treasuries are not made without a bribe. Charges of acceptance of commissions and cut backs on state transactions at the highest levels are far too many to be recounted. Public administration should not only be honest but must appear to be so. If we cannot reach the ideal of Gandhiji that a public worker should have no possession of his own we can at least that the public workers should disclose their assets annually with a verification on oath to some authority.

Nearly four centuries passed away after Vemana. Still the fundamental problems are under pending. Humanity did not reach his goals and not achieve ideals. Humanity is trapped by the demonic and devilish forces.

Today poverty and unemployment are increasing day by day. Life for four out of every ten Indians is a hard struggle for even the bare necessities of life- food, clothing and shelter. Several programmes launched by the Government for alleviation of poverty simply do not touch the poor for whom they are intended.

The three major problems afflicting the Indian society today are – a steep decline in standards of public life, an appalling absence of law and order all round, and abysmal poverty. We are racing against time. We must rescue the nation from evil forces and restore Dharma in national life.

Swami Vivekananda says, "to make a great future India, the whole secret lies in organization, accumulation of power, co-ordination of wills. Already before my mind rises one of the marvelous verse of the Rigveda Samhita which says "Be thou all of one mind, be thou all of one thought for in the days of yore, the gods being of one mind were enabled to receive oblations. That the gods can be worshipped by men is because they are of one mind." Though he was under the influence of Veerasaivism, he opposed reveal elements in the same religion. Veerasaivism never believed in Punarjanma (Transmigration) theory. But Vemana rejected it. He believes in Karma vada seriously. Macdonald also said " Vemana proposed strongly the Karmic theory and there are hundreds of verse to prove it." For example: "One who did not do good deeds in past life is a sinner it is useless to desire good profits in this life just like who did not sow seeds in fertile land to expect for harvest." In an another verse he says, "The drop of rain that falls into the mouth of the pearl fish becomes a pearl and the drop that falls into water gets mixed up with it. If one is destined to get rewarded who can dare to stand between him and his destiny. "Karma" is the law of action. Mind or body in a specific form of movement is termed "action."

What you have sown, you must reap now or in the future. It is not God who punishes your or rewards you. You are your own



Judge. You punish yourself through evil thoughts, and actions, or free yourself through good ones. Your only escape from Karmic law is to realize the self within.

Every action mentally or physically performed, consciously or unconsciously, has a specific effect on the life of man. These good and bad effects of actions in this present life remain in the sub-consciousness, and those seed effects brought over from past existences are hidden in the super consciousness. The seed effects of actions- good or bad are stored in the sub -consciousness or super consciousness until one develops spiritually to the point where his actions are not-longer identified with feeling or personal attachment. The idea is not total inaction or inertia; rather to cognize experiences without desire for the fruit(outcome) of action. Action is necessary to life on this plane, but it should be performed with unselfish ambition if one is to avoid imprisoning Karmic chains.

Actions that come under the classification of samskar are those past habits, or actions of past lives which come as the instincts and habits of this life. This inner environment governs your life. There is also an outer environment the planets, world, nation, family, neighborhood, books, and so forth. All these influence man's action. The Buddha realized that our suffering is not merely a product of chance. There are causes behind it as there

are causes for all phenomena. The law of cause and effect- Karma is universal and fundamental to existence nor are the causes beyond our control. "Karma however literally means action. Our own actions are the causes of whatever we experience." "Buddhih Karmanusarinee" a popular adage in Sanskrit. That means mind always follows Karma what he has done previously. "Fate is inevitable, powerful and man must experience it." Buddha says, "Every thing that we encounter in life is the result of our own action. Consequently we can each become master of our fate by becoming master of our own actions. Each of us is responsible for the actions that give rise to our suffering. Each of us has the means to end the suffering in our actions". He says

Your are your own master

You make your own future

Like Buddha Vemana was also a truth seeker. Vemana was known that the powerful influence of the universal pressure works on this material life. Though materially, physically man has freedom. Man must honour material life to do good deeds. Man should utilize it for self and for society. Then only win he get mental peace and happiness. No doubt it is human labour that produces every thing in physical life. The harmonious life leads to the supreme goal. Vemana with his extraordinary intelligence accepted the Karma theory but he was not a pessimist. He says

optimistically "Do good and help others. Love humanism. Live for humanity. Nobody should suffer for food, raiment and shelter. Those who exploit others selfishly will spoil their lives and families. "One who gives with a pure heart even a small quantity of food to a starving poor in the name of God he will attain heaven. Man should know the secret of Karma." In the limits of 17<sup>th</sup> century Vemana exposed extraordinary teachings to the country men.

Some thinkers exposed their doubts about Vemana. "Rationalism and mysticism cannot go together. The path of a rationalist and that of a mystic are incompatible. The same individual cannot tread both paths." "Religion and science or spiritualism and rationalism cannot go together. Both are parallels and can meet nowhere."

Noble personages like Kabir and Narse Mehata, Phule and others raised their voice and movingly expressed their agony against the evil of untouchability. Swami Vivekananda forcefully raised his powerful voice against untouchability as a national malaise – "In this country of ours, the birth place of the Vedanta our masses have been hypnotized for ages into a maya state. To touch them is pollution. To sit with them is pollution. Hopeless they were born and hopeless they must remain. And the result is they have been sinking sinking, sinking and have come to that last stage to which a human being can come, for what country is there where

man has to sleep with cattle?. There fore unfurl the banner of love wipe off these blots Arise, awake and be sincere. What is needed is character.”

According to Avatar Maherbaba : “The rear untouchables are those who cannot enter the temple of their own and see the Lord therein. the things which Meherbaba will not tolerate in any circumstances and by anyone howsoever high placed he may be are: (i) observance of caste, especially by the orthodox so called high caste people towards the so – called “depressed” or untouchables (ii)hypocrisy posing and (iii) backbiting.”

J.D.B Gribble published a different article on Vemana. In that article he pretended to have received the seven maxims direct from the supreme being which maxims formed the basis of his teaching. The seven Maxims are as follows:

1. Do not steal
2. Be always merciful
3. Do not hurt the feelings of others
4. Be content what you have
5. Be not Jealous of another
6. Forsake anger and be patient
7. Be constant in divine services.

These maxims would seem to aim at a higher doctrine of morality than are usually inculcated in this contrary. Above maxims are like Ten commandments in the Bible. (Appendix 1, Page 71 "Vemana through Western eyes") V.R. Narla admired Vemana as a humanist and nature's philosopher in his book Vemana. Dr. Eswar Topa in his book Saint Vemana and his Philosophy described Vemana as a reformer who strived for humanization and culturalisation.

**Do not Steal:** Theft is un pardonable crime. Robbery, roguery, hypocrisy, bandity encroachment, aggression all are synonyms to theft. Vemana says those who steal others property, those who deceive fellow beings and those who exploit innocent downtrodden poor people must be punished. In the 17<sup>th</sup> 18<sup>th</sup> centuries ( when Vemana was alive) Telugu people passed through a nightmare of war, political chaos, economic deprivation and social helplessness.

The peasant masses became victims of not only secular authorities but also charlatans and hypocrites. Vira Saivites, Vaishnavites and other sects were degenerated to such an extent that religion became opium of the people. Discerning observers like Vemana could see how the society reeled under the exploitation of parasitic poligars, Zamindars and renters.

Observing the toils and tribulations of the peasants in the villages, Vemana denounced the ruling classes. Where poligars often indulged in banditry, private wars, mutual Vendetta and

exhibited their ill gotten wealth with all the paraphernalia of degenerate monarchs in the Rayalaseema of 18<sup>th</sup> century. There was anarchy and the lives and properties of the poor peasants were at the mercy of every petty tyrant in the villages. Vemana raised his voice seriously against ruling classes. Vemana as a humanist always thought about "Vasudhaika Kutumbakam" the age old ideal. Vemana preached universal brother-hood and peace and prosperity of mankind.

There was a sloka in Isopanishad which reveals universal truth represents the ideology of Vemana.

***Esavasyamidam Sarvam***

***Yatkincha Jagatyam Jagat***

***Tena tyakthaia bhunjeetha***

***Magrithah Ksyasvith Dhanam.***

All this that exists and moves Is the abode of the Lord. After declaring the above truth about this manifest universe and its inner controller calls upon man to live, to act and to enjoy, but not selfishly nor self indulgently, but in the spirit of renunciation without attachment and without coveting or casting eyes on what belongs to others.

Man is born to act and to enjoy his life fully without fear but at present he is seen everywhere in misery. That is his own making. The Upanishat says they man should live actively and enjoy this

worldly existence but without any aggressive desires. This is the inner meaning of the ideology of Sri. Vemana.

### **Be always merciful**

Non-injury is our highest virtue. (Ahimsa paramo Dharmah)  
Compassion is a divine quality. Kind protection of animals is our sacred duty. This is India's special teaching. We must be compassionate towards all creatures. Then we will become true humanists. The heart of Vemana was filled with love and compassion. He always stood by the side of the weak. He advised "Do not hurt anybody and do not harm any living being. If you caught your enemy in miserable condition please realize him with love."

We are all children of the same father. Will his heart not be pained to see brother pitted against brother? Just as he has enveloped us in his embrace irrespective of caste, creed and religion, let us too transcend all artificial barriers and serve all his children. It is their service that we serve him.

The **Gita**, the **Bible**, the **Khoran** and **Guru Grantha Sahib**, all preach that the image of the Lord is love and He is all merciful. We should turn back to our roots and learn the meaning of spirituality and in their practice has the goal of spirituality union with the Lord. Vemana preached that the Almighty Lord resides in every human being. If you think to kill a man i.e. you are killing God. If

you abuse a person i.e. you are abusing God. Vemana rebuked Lingayaths (Vira Saivites) who prostrate before stone idol of Nandi and beats the living ones with whips.

**Don't hurt the feelings of others:** Do not make others unhappy or pained to earn your personal happiness. If you can please others, If you can make others happy they will be willing to help you in many ways. Be humble. Don't have superiority complex. Meet even the strangers as you are meeting your own loving brothers, sisters. The result will be marvelous. Material habits keep millions of people away from God. People of bad habits seek bad company. There may be good characteristics in bad people. Bad habits are easily found to be habitual liars and deceivers. That is why souls can never remain perpetually in bondage. Never condemn the sinner for he knows too well the fears and tortures of sin. Do not drown him in your hatred, but give him a chance to have his own "knocks", then he will be only too willing to be lifted.

People do not intentionally turn to evil, not do they really enjoy being evil. They are evil because they do not know the great charm of good habits, and are unable to compare and select the best. They fall under the influence of others opinions and unconsciously are led to evil. People who are evil behave so because they wrongly think that through evil they will get happiness easily. People cling to evil because they falsely magnify



the dread and torture supposed to be involved in self control. People are evil because they are compelled to do so by the powerful influence of evil instincts or wrong determinations.

**Be content with what you have:** Be content with what you have. Contentment gives a man a healthy mind and makes him cheerful and happy. Learn to like work. Since you have to work you may as well learn to like it and avoid making emotional troubles for your self.

Learn to be satisfied. It is just as easy under most conditions to be satisfied as it is to be satisfied. Like people – Join the human enterprises.

Meet adversity when it comes get up and go on.

Meet problems with decision,. Don't keep fighting them in your own mind.

Share your time, talent and treasure with the poor, sick and illiterates. It can give you satisfaction. Simple living and truthful behavior give inner joy, peace of mind and secure respect in the community. Helping others when in need gives immense satisfaction – As is rightly said, "We live when we are true in ourselves, sincere in our feelings, responsive to our convictions; we live when we are committed and concerned; we live when we love and serve." Respecting elders, loving everyone to be kind of compassionate, helping with affection and serving with sympathy

gives immense contentment. In Vemana's view satisfaction is the salvation. "He is poor who is dissatisfied. He is rich who is contented with what he has and he is richer who is generous with what he has" (A proverb)

**Be not jealous of another:** Jealousy is one of the dangerous inner enemies of man. It poisons the mental peace and happiness. Jealousy described as "rivalry in matters of interest or affection." One's individual happiness depends to a large extent upon his protecting himself and others from the hurtful results of gossip and jealousy. "See no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil, think no evil, feel no evil."

Most people can talk about other persons for hours; in intoxicated with the wine of gossip, they never think its poisonous effects. It is not remarkable how some people can smoothly, joyously, for hours at a time make the most caustic criticisms about the faults of the others, but cannot themselves endure for a moment any reference to their own faults.

It is necessary first to silently heal oneself of the desire to criticize. Once we have freed ourselves from the tendency to condemn and gossip about others, we may teach to be better by our sympathetic heart and good example.

Never use ill chosen words under stress of emotion. Sincere kindness and sweet courteous words accomplish much good and

bring happiness and peace, where unkind words would start up a conflagration of confusion and resentments and besides they are a great waste of your nerve energy. Always be sincere and kind and sweet you will know by reaction of those about you what they think of you.

Jealousy is not a proof of love of its object. It shows self-love and a selfish, possessive spirit. It is an insidious poison that slowly eats out the roots of real love, and so destroys that which it tries to grasp and hold. Broaden the circle of love to include all god's children. In the enlightened one's view "seeing person's higher qualities, one must experience joy, seeing another of inferior quality, one must show compassion and towards persons of the same quality one must cultivate friendship. In this way one will never be affected by affliction.

**Forsake Anger and be patient :** Anger is a dangerous devil. Anger is an internal problem which remains with us all the time till we die. Anger is a serious problem because its negative consequences are many. Not only does the angry person feel pain but the victim of anger also suffers pain but this pain is not momentary, it lingers for a long time. It immobilizes us and we are not able to function for long stretches of time.

Because of anger, hatred develops and hatred can break even close relationships. Relationships and friendships are developed

over many years and all this can be destroyed by just one moment of anger. Once a relationship is broken it is almost impossible to patch up. In anger we always speak and behave thoughtlessly, without discrimination and often we repent for our angry words and behaviour later. Anger disturbs peace of mind. Clearly anger is a powerful enemy within us. Anger is also a sign of weakness. It reflects the mind's inability to face difficult situations.

If we want to forsake anger we must develop our patience. Patience is only remedy for anger. When anger comes set your machinery of calmness in motion to manufacture the antidotes of peace, love, forgiveness that banish anger. Vemana also had anger but it has righteous anger. He used anger as an instrument or weapon against Anti social elements. Swamy Vivekananda says.

"The man who gives way to anger or hatred or any other passion cannot work; he only breaks himself to pieces and does nothing practical. It is the calm, forgiving, equable, well balanced mind that does the greatest amount of work."

**Be constant in Divine service:** God is one, God is love, God is merciful and God is unity. God resides in the hearts of all beings. All human beings are equal in the eyes of God. They are born and they die in the same way. Devotion to God and service to mankind irrespective of caste, creed or colour, is the duty of everyone.

Vemana preached "Do not increase division between man and man or promote conflict by taking sides with one group against another but give equal justice, equal love, equal good will to all. He condemned to set up barriers between rich and poor; employer and employed; master and servant but the equal mind towards all. Sri. Vemana aspires for the weal and welfare of all living beings of entire humanity. In view of the fact that he accepts – positively avers- the immanence of the absolute in the sentient and non-sentient things, he lays emphasis on every dignified ennobling human quality as non-violence, mercy, sympathy and readiness to serve.

He who feeds one hungry man is worthier than who discourses on God and heaven for a hundred years." Sri. Vemana emphasizes in his many moral and mystic verses. That there is no God in mountain caves or in temples. Man is abode of God and social service is divine service.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all other things all be added unto you" – Says Bible.

The saints of Bhakthi cult like Surdas, Tulasi das, Kabirdas, Purandharadas, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Tyagaraju told "Nirbal Ke Bal Ram" (God is the help of helpless, the strength of the weak)

Sri. Vemana laboured dispassionately without attachment to results.

He is the embodiment of fearlessness not physical courage but the total absence of fear from the mind. He saw divinity in every soul. To him fellow beings were part of his own flesh and blood and the world in one family – that is Vasudhaika kutumbakam.” Sri. Vemana is the first people’s poet in Telugu who wrote for the sake of people with social consciousness in a simple local language. He selected “ Ataveladi” metre as his main instrument to preach his ideas and ideals. On some occasions he used Kanda and Tetagethis metres to convey his thoughts. His verses are meaningful and though provoking . He popularized Ataveladi which attracts literates and illiterates.

He beautified his verses with natural native telugu proverbs and usages. Vemana utilized them in all directions. He searched in the period of crisis the gloomy corners of society with burning heart. Whenever comes necessity he sharpens his poetic weapon angrily to activate.

He did not care the knowledge of Sanskrit, authority on language and style and poetic rules and regulations. His aim is welfare of the society. In his long journey of life he faced many obstacles. He continued his tireless fight to achieve his ends. Whether the verses are humorous, moral, satirical or mystical his main object is to uplift the mass who are helpless and hopeless. He is a natural poet inspired by the divine will. He shows in a small

spoon a roaring ocean. He exhibits in a small piece of mirror a mountain range. He displays in a small seed the greatness of banyan tree. Some of his verses are lightening and some are whirl winds. Before three hundred years the western priests, scholars and officials astonished after reading his translations in Tamil and Kannada and Malayalam languages. Dr. C. Narayan Reddy the famous Telugu poet, winner of Jnanapeetha award wrote in his thesis "Adhunikandhra Kavulu -Sampradayamulu prayogamulu about Vemana-

"In those days ( 16-17 centuries) there was only the voice of Vemana resounded the entire Telugu land. He used his poetry as Vajrayudha ( a weapon of Indra) against cruel Vedic culture and its rigorous rules. He did not take a new way but showed a variety in the material. He began the satirical verses in the Telugu literature for the first time. He criticized directly Anti social elements, which happens in the society. He told the verses for the sake of multitudes suffering from various problems. His aim is social reformation. His experiment is praise worthy."

Rallapalli Anantakrishna Sarma says "Vemana poetry is a double edged sharpened weapon which had the healing power also. Maha Kavi Sri. Sri. Says, "Tikkana of 13<sup>th</sup> century, Vemana of 17<sup>th</sup> century and Gurajada of 20<sup>th</sup> century are great poets in Telugu literature because they are people's poets. Sri Sri. Once said in a

public meeting “All knows Vemana what kind of poet he is. I cannot say more than this. He attacked not only on social evils and hypocrisy but also God. It is a painful thing that our so called pandits and scholars realized recognized lately. Today we are praising him as a world poet because we have got modern out look and scientific criticism.

Arudra a modern poet, critic and research scholar says “Whether Vemana knows or not the art of Alchemy but he gave the verses of golden pieces to his people which are imperishable.” D.V. Krishna Sastry the poet of poets who was called a full length mirror of Andhra Pradesh and Andhra Shelly wrote a hundred satirical verses in the way of Vemana taking crowning line “Viswadabhirama Vinura Vema.”

Venkata parvateswara Kavulu (a twin poets) who are established poets in Telugu praised Vemana’s ideology and practical philosophy in poems as “ Akhilopa yogi Vemanna yogi” (A useful poet for All and forever) Joshuva and Karunasri stars in the telugu literary galaxy paid their heartfelt tributes.

Today all poets from all fields from all movements honourably respects him as an ideal poet. No body hates him. His literary personality is ever growing. Even to day also there are many families i.e. Sri. Vemana’s followers, disciples and lovers kept his writings (Talapathras) palm leaves as a holy scriptures in ‘Pooja



mandiram's in their houses with deep devotion. A great deal of research work has been done on Vemana by scholars, Historians and critics like Sarva Sri. Vanguri, Rallapalli, Bandaru, V.R. Narla, Tekumalla, Komarrajun Arudra, M. Kodanda Rami Reddy, M. Pattabhi Rami Reddy, C.R. Reddy many hundreds of lovers of Sri. Vemana published their works. Many research centres were established in all the cities in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

Thousands of books in the form of Verses, stories, dramas, essays are published in 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hundreds of research scholars got doctorates from various universities in Various languages. Vemana is a viswakavi ( a world poet) and Viplava yogi ( a rebel sage) who became a legend in his own life time. "His poetry is ever flowing river." Scholars Views about Sri. Vemana Abbe J.A. Dubois's amongst the few Hindu works which are written in a free philosophical view and which the Hindu religion and its customs are openly criticized, not one that I know of has been written by a Brahmin. One of the most famous is Vemana whose poems originally written in Telugu, have since been translated into several other languages. We are told that this philosopher who was of the Reddy caste and was born in the district of Cuddapah; died towards the end of the seventeenth century. His writings from which I have seen several extracts appear to me to be most

interesting and are distinguished by much discernment and independence.

C. P. Brown lived in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Many verses however prove satisfactorily that he wrote in the latter part of the seventeenth century when the Mohammadens were governors of that part of India. These poems have attained very great popularity and parts are found translated into Tamil, Malayalam or Canarese. Of his aphorisms many have become proverbs. Part of these are evidently close translations from Sanskrit works, particularly the Hitopadesa and Bhagavadgeetha.

Vemana was evidently of the Vedanta school. With the mystic tenets of Plato, those of Vemana, closely correspond while his moral doctrines closely answer to those of Democritus, a remarkable instance of a powerful mind searching for the light of truth which is lost in the darkness of heathen ignorance.

Dr. Pope observes that the writings of Vemana are extremely popular among the Telugu people. His popularity, I believe is entirely confined to the Sudras, and even among them, every true believer in Hinduism regards him with much the same feelings as an evangelical curate looks on Colenso; this feeling was apparent when Vemana was first made a text book in Government of Schools. Both teachers and pupils did all they could do to evade the order. In some instances the introduction of it into classes, for which it was prescribed was postponed under various pretences.

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